THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENCES IN EDIFICATION BETWEEN AN AFRO-CENTRIC AND EURO-CENTRIC CONGREGATION IN A CHURCH IN TRANSITION

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A FINAL DOCUMENT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO
December, 1997

United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio

Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Document

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ABSTRACT

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The project was designed to raise the level of ethnic, racial, and cultural awareness of differences of edification in an Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregation. Study group discussions and visits to churches to experience differences in three methods of edification -- preaching, music, and emotional-tone were used. De-briefings followed these visits.

Participants demonstrated a willingness to adjust preconceived perceptions and viewed diversity as positive, both for church growth and spiritual edification. Study group participants indicated high levels of commitment to work toward understanding diversity in edification while celebrating commonality in Christ. Results are reported by ethnographic vignettes.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express gratitude for the patience and gentle guidance of my mentor and friend, Wyatt Tee Walker. I recall Wyatt attending my initial sermon and his response to my statement: "I feel as though I have written a dissertation." To which he replied, "A dissertation involves about 200 more pages of blood, sweat, and toil." He was correct. I thank him, first, for inspiring me to the ministry, and second, for the nearness of a friendship he never allowed to get in the way of this journey.

I am thankful that God assigned the Rev. Dr. Franklyn Richardson as our player-coach, he could always be depended on for a game-winning 'point after.'

Heart-felt thanks to my peers in the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary, all of whom accept me just as I am, and took but five minutes to make me feel welcome in my belated arrival in joining the group.

Proudly, I acknowledge my daughter, Cheryl Baisden, with whom I am greatly pleased, and whose considerable editorial skills

saved the day when there were rivers of thoughts and a trickle of words.

Thanks also to Alma Herndon Wade, who some years ago "got me away from behind those prepositions," and straighten my crooked English.

Without the continued encouragement of my out-going wife, Elizabeth Anne Wade, I would not have pursued higher education. Bet has pushed and inspired me through college, seminary and this doctoral program, for that I am eternally appreciative.

I am indebted to the participants in the field study aspect of this project, without whom it would not have happened. Special appreciation is extended to my church family at Community Church at the Circle, Mount Vernon, New York, for their encouragement and support throughout.

PREFACE

This project set out to demonstrate that if one would gain an understanding of the difference in worship modality between diverse worshipping racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, he or she would become more receptive to assimilating into their worship the traditions of others. As I moved into the project phase of this model in ministry project, several questions arose that I could not ignore. The study revealed that the order of service and procedures of the worship services were similar; in fact, the church bulletin of one church could well be substituted for the other. Yet, there was something different about individual services.

What occurred after visiting other congregations and analyzing worship practices was that 'worship' began to be understood as an individual act. Further, in our group discussions and observations it was felt that something else was taking place, or not taking place, in the gathering of believers.

In reviewing the underlying scriptures, particularly Paul's writings on what takes place within the gathering of the body of

Christ, I found that Paul never mentioned worship as the focus of coming together. Rather, Paul saw the work of the meeting of believers as an opportunity to share the gifts of the Spirit that were to be found among them for the edifying (building-up) of the body of Christ, both spiritually and physically.

The focus of our group turned toward a discussion of how communication occurs among people of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. There emerged little common understanding of the nuances of such interaction, rather, we discovered that a lack of understanding led to misunderstanding.

Transferring this information to the model, it was easily observed that what was different in the 'worship service' was the application of the methodologies of edification. It is no different in secular life; we listen to each other but do not always hear each other because of essential differences in our approach to communicating. The desire to achieve a multicultural, multiracial body of Christ that recognizes diversity, yet celebrates our commonality in Christ requires acknowledgment and response to these differences in communication. This paper is a small step in that direction.

INTRODUCTION

The edification[1] of the body of Christ is at the center of Christian spiritual growth (Eph. 4:12-14), and the biblical means of its physical growth (Eph. 4:16). Gathering to give thanks for God's abundant blessings and to praise and honor God is the method by which we can share, in community, the diverse gifts of the Spirit, God has placed among us. Coming together as worshipping Christians reflecting the ethnic and cultural diversity of our communities is also a means by which we can begin to embrace what it means to be a Christian in a multiracial, multicultural society celebrating our commonality in Christ.

With all the potential for developing cross-cultural bridges of understanding in our communities, church services remain the most segregated aspects of our lives. Churches of the same denomination, which long ago worked out variant theological positions, find it difficult to accommodate the diverse ethnic, racial,

[1] A review of the glossary (page 126) of terms used in this paper maybe helpful, at this juncture.

and cultural styles of edification evident in today's eclectic communities. Congregations in transitional communities in particular respond by either removing themselves from the challenges of multiracial, multicultural existence by selling or disbanding their church or by paying lip-service to diversity by sending the clear signal, "If you will come and be like us, we will accept you."

This work offers the opportunity to meet face to face the diversity in edification we are likely to encounter in congregational transition, so that transition may become inclusion by opening to the congregation the possibility of incorporating differences.

In Chapter One, the project focus is defined in terms of church, community, and personal context. The 106-year faith journey of Community Church at the Circle of Mount Vernon, New York, a church in transition seeking to understand diverse styles of edification, is chronicled. The city of Mount Vernon and the diversity of its population is described. The chapter concludes with an account of the writer's personal multiracial, multicultural sojourn in search of personal and community acceptance. The discussion includes pertinent information which significantly influenced this work.

Chapter Two surveys relevant literature which has led the way

to the final design of this model in ministry project. Noted is relevant text that supports the project goal of understanding diversity of edification in churches and opening opportunities for transition to become inclusion.

In Chapter Three a theological foundation for the model in ministry project is laid beginning with a discussion of worship. A biblical basis for the body of Christ and a review of edification is included. Each method of edification observed during the project – preaching, music, and emotional tone is rooted in a biblical base that provided a framework for Bible study and group discussion of racial, ethnic and cultural approaches to edification. The chapter ends with a look at spiritual gifts as a means of unity.

Chapter Four works through the choice of the qualitative research paradigm as the methodology used in the field study. Discussion of the characteristics of this method, and my role as a participant/observer, is followed by a description of the setting, participants, and process of data collection. Data collection strategies, data analysis procedures, and data verification methods are outlined. Finally, the method of reporting the findings is stated.

Results which reflect progress toward the model's goal of improving ethnic, racial, and cultural understanding are presented in Chapter Five. The chapter concludes with a presentation of results of the model in the form of ethnographic vignettes.

Chapter Six offers a summation, comments and suggestions for alternative methodology and adjustment of the project design to fit changes in focus that surfaced during implementation. Finally, the basis for a refined model ministry project enlightened and informed by field experience, methodology modification and participants feedback is presented.

CHAPTER ONE

PROJECT FOCUS

In this chapter, the project focus is defined in terms of church, community, and personal context. The 106-year faith journey of Community Church at the Circle of Mount Vernon, New York, a church in transition seeking to understand diverse styles of edification, is chronicled. A description of the city of Mount Vernon and the diversity of its population follows. The chapter concludes with an account of the writer's personal multiracial, multicultural sojourn in search of personal and community acceptance.

The purpose of this model in ministry project is to engender understanding and acknowledgment of diverse methodologies of edification in a church in transition. Developing the ability to appreciate and celebrate diversity is central to a successful transition. One of the obstacles to reversing the decline of established churches in changing ethnic, racial, and cultural environments is a failure to prepare for the inevitable shift in

worship style and approach to edification of the body of Christ.

It is natural to want to be with people like ourselves; however, such exclusive ethnic, racial, and cultural alignment in the worship of God is contrary to the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. Such attitudes and practices do not present opportunities for the church to serve as a bridge of understanding in the eclectic communities of today. In material prepared to inform its member churches on multiracial and multicultural church worship, the United Church of Christ, the denomination of Community Church, states:

> The American and the global context in which we live are clearly multiracial in character. We now live in a context in which many cultures coexist, albeit with differing degrees of comfort. Although we continue to live with the reality of a dominant race and culture, belief that such dominance should continue is aligned with racism and has been labeled sin by almost all facets of the church. The notion that we can continue to live and worship as isolated racial or cultural groups is contrary to our present reality and more importantly, it is contrary to being Christian.[1]

Too often I have heard those professing to be Christians expressing negativism regarding church transition situations. I recall comments such as, "Well, you know, the neighborhood has changed," give the impression that chickens, and cattle have moved in instead of people. A member of the clergy in Mount Vernon,

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[1] Goffrey A. Black, "An Approach to Multiracial, Multicultural Worship," (United Church of Christ, Multiracial & Multicultural Church: Worship, 1996) 2.

serving his third transition church, once commented to me: "You get used to it. I just divide the annual budget into the church's resources, that way I have a pretty good idea of how long I will stay here." In my opinion our churches ought to be avenues of welcome over bridges of acceptance, not pillars of polarization upholding bastions of bigotry. I believe that the path our churches take is the path our communities will follow.

There appears to be a pattern to the downward slide of communities that expresses indifference to the ethnic, racial and cultural changes that occur in their midst. It is a pattern I observed in my rearing in Camden, New Jersey. From personal experience I can attest to the decline of Camden from tree-lined oasis to war-torn ruin. This paraphrased quote from Time Magazine, found in Philip Christian Hirsch's dissertation, Reducing the Propensity for Urban Violence Through the Strengthening of Relationships, [2] sums up Camden's decline:

> Up until 1945 or so, this city was a monument of the gusto and grit of a nation laboring to create itself. Camden built everything from battleships to toilet seats and people around here claim you could find more industry in these nine square miles than anywhere in the world. This was the home of the Victor Talking machine,

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[2] Philip Hirsch, "Reducing the Propensity for Urban Violence Through the Strengthening of Relationships" (D. Min. diss., United Theological Seminary, 1996) 7.

> Campbell's soup and the Esterbrook pen. . . Bard of it all was Walt Whitman, In the 50's and 60's the city's white middle class headed for the suburbs. . . Left behind were blacks, Hispanics and poor whites, who found themselves pauperized as the town's industry and jobs - slowly disappeared. [3]

How diversity is handled, whether we see it coming or belatedly awaken to its presence in our churches or in our communities, will be instrumental in guiding a congregation into its future as a diverse, loving, and nurturing faith community. How diversity is handled may also determine whether there will be a future for a congregation. There is a path to church decline in transitional communities. Walter Ziegenhals describes the problems that face a congregation where transition is present as including such factors as:

> . . . aging and decline in membership; a diminishing financial base; insufficient or inadequate leadership; racial fears; as well as ethnic, cultural, and class fears; movement of membership away from the church building; inability to understand the interrelation between the community's fate and the church's future estrangement from new neighbors; concern with local issues to the exclusion of metropolitan trends; and difficulty in defining the mission of the church beyond meeting the needs of the present membership.[4]

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[3] Kevin Fedarko, "Who Could Live Here?," Time Magazine , 3 January 1992, 20-23.

[4] Walter E. Ziegenhals, Urban Churches in Transition (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1978), 15.

The church in transition is caught up in the immediacy of its survival, and has neither the time nor the energy to acknowledge that the future is not in the past but in the diversity of the present. The rich deposit of resources, and spiritual gifts residing in the newcomers are undetected because of a failure to see diversity as the answer. If we uncover the basis for the spiritual need; learn that need grows out of ethnic, racial, and cultural roots; and discover how we as an established worshipping community can fill those needs, chances for church renewal and survival may be significantly improved.

The City of Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon, New York is a crossroads of city and suburb; 4.2 densely populated square miles nestled between the wealth of Westchester, and the brokenness of the Bronx. Located at the edge of the New York City metropolitan area, the city is easily accessible by car, train, and public transportation. The population of over 67,153 has a steadily increasing eclectic presence of foreign-born residents. In recent years, there has been an influx of immigrants from the Caribbean, Portugal and over twenty-three other South American, and Asian countries, a mix which is quite different from

the city's early immigrants, who were mainly European.

According to 1990 census data, Mount Vernon's population consists of 37,138 Black, 26,698 White, 5,237 Hispanic and 10,441 other ethnic and racial groups.[5] The overwhelming majority of Mount Vernon's Black population lives on the south side, while most Whites live on the north side. The community is, for the most part, polarized by geographical layout and sociological stratification, with little interaction between ethnic and cultural groups. The majority of the city's government officials are Black.

A constant issue in the community is the school system. Although the student population is over 80 percent Black, the administration and teaching staff is 90 percent White. The school budget of $92 million is double the Mount Vernon city budget. The board of education is also the city's largest employer. It was not until May, 1997, after a 20-year battle, that the Black majority was able to gain control of the school system. The extent of the community's polarization over this issue is far-reaching.

There are over two hundred-fifty places of worship of every ilk in Mount Vernon. Nearly every denomination is represented, some dozens of times. Community Church at the Circle is located near

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[5] Statistics cited are gleaned from 1990 census data. Additional statistics can be found in Appendix A.

the geographic center of the city, astride the north/south dividing line of Lincoln Avenue.

Church Context

According to historical records,[6] Community Church was born about the same time as the city of Mount Vernon. On April 1, 1892, a portion of the town of Eastchester became the city of Mount Vernon, a newly incorporated community with a European and White population of 15,000.

In the months preceding the spring of 1892, a dedicated group of people began holding Sunday school, song services, and girls' sewing classes. On March 21, 1892, the initial meeting to discuss the organization of the First Congregational Church was held. A small building on the South Side, at the corner of South High Street and Mount Vernon Avenue, was rented for $200 a year. Fourteen people signed as charter members of the new, First Congregational Church. The church immediately gained a community symbol; it became known as the "Rooster Church," because of the "rooster" perched on the weathervane on top of the spire. It was an old

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[6] No actual history of Community Church exists. Information about the past was found in church bulletins, pamphlets, minutes and various records in church archives.

German custom to display a rooster on a church as a somber warning to the people not to deny Christ as Peter did.

On November 10, 1892, the first pastor, the Reverend Lewin F. Buell, a recent Yale graduate, was installed. The church experienced such rapid growth that in July 1983, the congregation moved to larger quarters in a portable building at the corner of Valentine Street and North Ninth Avenue. In his five and a half years as pastor of First Congregational Church, Rev. Buell had added 151 members to the original 14. First Congregational was well-established and without debt. It was *the church* of the rising stars of the community.

One on those rising stars was the next pastor, Reverend Owen R. Lovejoy, who arrived on February 12, 1899, and played a prominent part in public affairs in the city of Mount Vernon. Rev. Lovejoy was a pioneer in preaching the "social gospel," and the church continued to advance under its progressive minister. Rev. Lovejoy left in 1904, to become the Secretary of the National Child Labor Committee in Washington, DC., where he was instrumental in securing much-needed legislation on child labor.

The next pastor, Reverend William B. Alles, stayed a little over a year, leaving to take a position as a city probation officer. The church's fortunes declined. There was no leadership. Debts

began to accumulate. The building was inadequate and was located on the 'wrong' side of town. Emigration was swelling the city. Members left the church behind to find a more 'suitable' situation.

In 1907, the Reverend Herbert Chandler Ide, attempted to bring the struggling congregation out of the doldrums. By 1912, the old building was sold, lots were purchased in the church's present location and a new church was constructed. Membership increased, and the church was stabilized.

Over the next 20 years, Mount Vernon's population increased by 50 percent, and among its civic improvements was Hartley Park, opposite the church on Lincoln Avenue, a main street through the city. The circle was landscaped, and Gramatan Avenue, another main street bordering the side of the church, was widened, all adding to the dignity and beauty of First Congregational.

It was wartime, membership has fallen off and it was not a good time to call a minister, so the congregation managed with supply ministers. It was poetic justice that one of these supply ministers, the Reverend Carl S. Weist, was the man who for the next 34 years would guide the destiny of First Congregational to its greatest achievement in membership and activity.

In January 1919, while visiting a young lady in New York City, Carl Weist, a young soldier, ran short of money and applied for one

of the supply preaching jobs available at Congregational headquarters. The Rev. Weist preached at the church several times, and in March 1919 accepted the call to become the minister of the First Congregational Church. When he began his ministry on April 1 of that year, there were only about 50 people worshipping regularly at the church; by 1924, chairs were placed in the aisles and members had to be mindful to sit down after hymns and scripture readings or they lost their seats. Church facilities were outgrown.

An organized expansion campaign was started on March 22, 1925; a month later, $88,000 had been raised. The church was enlarged to approximately twice its original size, and significant alterations were made.

On May 25,1930, the congregation voted to adopt the name, The Community Church at the Circle. They felt that they could better serve the entire community if membership was offered to people of any denomination, with the understanding that those who joined might continue to support the denomination of their original affiliation. The warm, loving attitude of Rev. Weist, and the Community Church family made this diverse worshipping community work. From the records of the church it is clear that Dr. Weist, was concerned with providing a loving and caring community in and out of the church.

Whether the change of name had anything to do with it is not established, but clearly, for the next two decades, Community Church at the Circle played a constantly growing role in the community life of the city of Mount Vernon.

During these two decades, Mount Vernon experienced a rapidly expanding population and an encouraging economy, and earned the reputation of being a city of happy homes, and pleasant, tree-shaded streets. Established Protestant families were faithful members.

Dr. Weist retired on September 28, 1952, after 34 years of service. The church then called the Reverend J.. Charles Pelon, a man of almost opposite demeanor, to pastor the Community Church. A difference of opinion arose as to the direction of the ministry of the church, and for the second time in the history of the congregation a number of members felt they must seek a more compatible climate in another fellowship.

About this time, the cultural, ethnic, and racial makeup of Mount Vernon began to change from European American to African American, and West Indian. As church members moved from the community, a steady decline of membership began. Rev. Pelon resigned following 19 years of service.

He was replaced by Rev. Harry A. Aufiero, a man possessed

with a spirit of ecumenism similar to Reverend Weist. Pastor Aufiero died following a long illness that unfolded and concluded during his service to Community Church. At the time of his death, the church was near the end, after experiencing a steady decline in membership as the city experienced a 180-degree turn in racial, and ethnic mix, from majority White to majority Black.

Community Church, after almost five years of leadership that came and went rapidly, called Rev. Alexandria Coe to her first pastorate in April 1991, as a part-time minister. During her stay Community Church began to share its facility with a Korean-speaking Methodist congregation, which provided a measure of financial stability. Rev. Coe accepted an upstate New York position.

I came to the church as a part-time minister, full-time pastor in October 1995. I have found the congregation, which is small in numbers, determined to keep the church going and moving in whatever direction God takes them.

Because of the tenacious dedication to the legacy of love left by a multitude of past members and pastors, many of the church's present leadership fill many positions, and work tirelessly to keep hope alive. What seems to be missing is a vehicle by which the changed community surrounding the church can be made to feel at home, and in familiar fellowship through worship. There is more than

a willingness to open wide the doors of the church to be all-inclusive.

In reviewing the church's past history, it seemed that it prospered when appeals were made without respect to denominational affiliation. Worship services were designed to be inclusive, and although in those years the congregation was Euro-centric, different cultures, and ethnic groups found commonality in worship and fellowship.

To effectively continue God's work, mission, and vision for the Community Church, we must acknowledge and respect our racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity while celebrating our commonality in Christ.

BIOGRAPHY

In 1985, while I was traveling in China, among people who had so little, I realized I was living less than a full life. The Chinese people were open, caring, and would share with anyone who crossed their path, even complete strangers.

A calligrapher, his wife, daughter, her husband, and five-year-old son, all of whom lived in a ten by ten foot shop stall, insisted my friend and I have tea and bread. The best of what they had was

given to us with warmth, and appreciation for our visit. I, with so much in material goods, was sharing nothing. That visit enlightened me to the fact that life is not about what you have, but how you share.

It was on this journey that one of the most significant incidents of my life occurred. I was traveling with the Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker and a group from the Canaan Baptist Church of Harlem, New York. I took this trip to spend some time with Wyatt's brother Jimmy, who was a close friend suffering the recent loss of his wife. Although I am of mixed racial heritage, (my father was an African-American, my mother Italian) it was the first time in my adult life that I was with so many African-Americans for a protracted time.

I became extremely ill during the China visit from mistakenly drinking a little water. The concern and care I received was overwhelming to me. I was accepted, and lovingly cared, and prayed for as a fellow human being. People I had, in some measure, rejected in my adult life, embraced me, just as I was. I could not help but to think of my departed father, and the feelings of rejection he must have felt. I was confronted with the other me. One that felt natural. One that did not require a mask

God gave me a testimony to share. It is not who you are, it is whose your are. If you cannot love yourself just as God created

you, how can you expect to love or be loved by others. I am of mixed parentage. For me to deny a part of that heritage is to deny all of me. God loves me just as I am; my fellow travelers surfaced God's love in a concrete way I could not deny.

The hard part became convincing those around me that I was sincere in my new-found commitment to myself, and to the church. Friends and family questioned my motives, questioned my identify. But I pushed on, focusing down the road I now chose to travel. They have come around since that time, but even if they had remained skeptical I would have continued on.

At 44, I headed back to church after years of religious isolation, drawn by the search for community. In the black community, church is the center of activity, and it seemed natural to turn there for the warmth, companionship and understanding I was seeking.

Back home, I took the first step toward my future by committing to a long-suppressed call to the ministry. I wanted to attend a seminary, but I did not have an undergraduate degree. I earned my degree in an unusual way at New Jersey's Thomas Edison State College, through the college-level examination program (CLEP). I put aside business interests, and committed myself to studying and taking examinations. During that process I received an invitation for

potential students to visit Princeton Theological Seminary. When I arrived there I felt a peace. I knew that was where God wanted me to be. A minister friend told me that Mickey Mouse had a better chance of being accepted at Princeton. When I was accepted, I "told" my "friend" where "Mickey" was going.

I devoted myself to completing my undergraduate work. It was a great relief when that goal was finally accomplished. I prepared to enter Princeton in the fall. My wife Elizabeth and I had been traveling shortly before my graduation from Thomas Edison State College; when we arrived home there was a letter from the Dean of Students. I had been chosen to receive an award for outstanding achievement. I had earned an undergraduate degree in nine months, no one had ever accomplished that. When I called to thank the dean, she said, "Mr. Baisden, we have been trying to reach you, the Board of Trustees has chosen you as the speaker for your class." Governor Thomas Kean was the commencement speaker and I was the class speaker. I write this not to boast, but to point out another lesson I have learned. God does not look for qualified people, God takes you as you are and qualifies you.

God has provided opportunities for me to travel widely in preparation for God's service. I have been blessed to have completed several missionary journeys.

During one journey to Africa, my wife and I lived for five months with the people of Nigeria. She, a physician, attended to the medical needs of the people and I ministered to their spiritual growth. We shared in all aspects of the lives of the people, experiencing all types of social situations. It was an eye-opener to realize just how much we have in common with other people when it came to life struggles regardless of circumstances.

I came away with many memories of Nigerian pastors' dedication to serving God. For example, my wife and I , along with another couple, made a three-day visit to a remote village reached by a five-hour boat ride. James Yellin, the pastor of the small open-air church, spent 45 minutes trudging along winding paths once a day to conduct services. He had built the church a distance away so that it was central to more villages. When we left, we gave him a gift of 800 niar ($80) to buy a bicycle. James wept with joy, not because it would make his trip to church easier, but because he would be able to "reach villages further out."

The opportunity to observe such dedication, and commitment to the gospel of Christ by men and women in such a different cultural setting made a lasting impression on me. I clearly saw how God uses cultural diversity to accomplish the mission of the church.

My wife and I have also had the privilege of serving through

street ministry in the Netherlands and New Zealand, and traveling among the Aboriginal people in Australia. While attending a service at Ayres Rock, in central Australia, I was amused to see one of the women from our group holding an umbrella over the heads of two Aborigines men, shading them from the sun to which they had been hardened for generation upon generation. The sight underlined for me our occasional unwillingness to accept others as they are in their culture and context, and adjust to them rather than attempt to force them to adjust to our ways.

At home, I began my work in the ministry as an assistant chaplain at Mercer County Community College's urban campus. The variety of students I spoke with on a daily basis reinforced my conviction that we are all similar in the human spirit, we simply express it differently.

My first pastorate was Flatbush-Tompkins, Congregational Church of Brooklyn, an old historic church, well-endowed with finance and facility. There was much to be done to bring the church, with its eclectic membership, into the mainstream of community involvement. In Community District 14, the area surrounding the church, where 160,000 people lived virtually on top of each other, a total of 44 murders, 827 rapes, and assaults, and 5307 robberies and burglaries took place in the year preceding my

call. Those who had witnessed the demise of Community District 14 as members of Flatbush-Tompkins Congregational Church, had learned to ignore the violence and side-step the suffering. They simply closed their eyes to the changes that had occurred over the years. That blindness was the disease I struggled to cure.

Easily 75,000 people lived within ten square blocks of the church. Most residents felt other neighborhoods had trouble, not their own. The truth was, trouble was just around the corner.

There was a time when Flatbush-Tompkins had strong ties to the liberal wing of the congregational church. The congregation was active, and involved, staging plays, and hosting dinners for the poor, sponsoring their own branch of the Red Cross during both world wars, and missionary work at home and abroad. But, by the 1960s, the congregation had tossed aside its image of liberalism and social concern, trading afternoon women's league meetings where clothing was stitched for the poor for tight-lipped teas, and brisk Bridge parties.

The doors to Flatbush-Tompkins Congregational church were locked to all but a few. Sunday service was the only time the rambling building was alive with voices. The auditorium , gymnasium, meeting rooms, and kitchens collected dust rather than serve the Community District 14 area, which possesses not a single

playground, community center , homeless shelter, or soup kitchen to care for its 160,000 residents, close to 30 percent of whom had not graduated from high school.

I experienced two years of frustration attempting to bring the Flatbush-Tompkins Church to community involvement. Despite the blessing of their endowment, and the need for a facility to serve the hard-pressed community, the trustees and membership were resolute in their refusal to share their blessings.

When my call ended, I entered a period of questioning my ability to discern between God's call and my commitment. It was a time of intense reflection. How could I utilize my life experience?

Raised in a Camden, New Jersey, slum in the 1950s, I faced the constant struggle of growing up in an inter-racial family. My father was African-American, Native American, and Irish; my mother was Italian-American. We never, to my recollection, discussed race in our family. Unable to fit into either social circle, I had no difficulty accepting others. It was not reciprocal. Often the joy of acceptance turned to piercing pain of rejection when my mixed heritage became known, even by those thought to be best friends.

My first recollection of rejection is when we moved from the rural town of Lawnside, New Jersey, into the bustling bright city of Camden. My mother enrolled us in the nearest grammar school,

ironically, Abraham Lincoln School. I recall fondly those first few days in that classroom -- the wooden desks, the ink wells, the blond plaits, the feeling of friendliness, the welcome and well-wishing.

Suddenly, like a bolt out of the blue, the teacher moved me to a different seat, the first seat, in the left row, where the spotlight of the sunlight streamed in. She gave me a sealed note to take home.

The next day, while my siblings and I stayed home, our mother, as the note requested, met with school officials. The principal told her that "while some of her best friends were Negro," we would have to enroll in a school further from our home. Their school was for Whites only. I saw no difference.

In those early years, rejection came in personal relationships as well. A White girl who I considered a girlfriend invited me to her birthday party. I had spent time with some of her family and friends, and had always felt welcomed among them. That is , until I heard her father ordering her to "bring that half-breed in here" while the party was underway.

Still, I constantly found myself trusting people, believing that they were looking beyond my ethnic makeup, seeing me for the positive things I accomplished and for my determination to succeed.

Enterprising was a natural part of my personality. At age nine I was working nights at 35-cents an hour rolling display tires into a

local tire sales outlet at closing time. By the age of eleven, I was employed by two brothers to clean up their tuxedo rental store, which conducted business in seventeen states.

At sixteen, I was put in charge of their shipping department, and until I was old enough to drive, they paid a man to escort me to colleges and private schools along the East Coast to drum up business.

Trips to some of the top private boarding schools in the country introduced me to an entirely different lifestyle. Children from varied racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds came from around the world and lived together in places like The Hun School, in Princeton, New Jersey. They were the sons and daughters of diplomats, heads of state, the wealthy and the privileged. I marveled at how this diverse, multiracial, multicultural group managed to live together. They had commonality, money.

Coming from the section of Camden that was selected as the nation's first site for urban renewal, and contrasting that with how children of what we now call the "rich and famous" lived, I began to think about living on the 'other' side. I came to recognize what pleasures money could provide, and became more and more comfortable in well-to-do White society.

The opportunity to occasionally visit my employers' homes

added to my education. I felt like a member of the family, and then, as it always did, the other shoe dropped.

I was sweeping off the steps of the store after hours, when a friend of my employer asked if I was his son. I can still hear one of the brothers bellow "Who that nigger?" like it was yesterday.

But, I stuck with the job until the pressures of overseeing a large operation at such an early age got the better of me. Doubled over in pain from a bleeding ulcer at the age of twenty-one, I was being carried out to an ambulance when one of the brothers commanded a worker to check my pockets for orders. So much for compassion. I got the message.

It was then I decided that if I wanted to be successful, I would have to make an economic and social decision, one that would ultimately provide adequately for my Italian wife, and two children. I decided to live on the 'other' side. I purchased a new home in a White suburban community and for nearly thirty years lived as White. I joined organizations and groups that reflected my adopted perspective. I was the first African-American President of the Greater Camden Jaycees, but no one knew of that distinction.

As a businessman, I opened my first formal wear shop, in competition with my former employers, when I was twenty-one. Over the next seventeen years, my business base expanded to include

four formal wear shops, four clothing boutiques, and one bridal shop. At one time the operation employed forty-eight people, and generated over $1 million a year in sales.

I had developed a $250,000 line of credit at a bank with which I had transacted business for years. When a vice-president of the bank, with whom I was quite friendly, discovered my father was African-American, he called my loans. I shall never forget the feeling following that phone call. It was a wake-up call to reality that to this day can cause me to feel the violence of vomiting to uselessness.

Through my business endeavors I have met the challenge of coordinating people, materials, and money, while encouraging people to work harmoniously together. In my business I employed a cross-section of people with diverse problems. I found that most of the difficulties people have in interaction stem from a misunderstanding of the cultural, ethnic, and social mores of others.

Through my life's broad experiences, selected reading and study, and significant travel, certain truths, and principles have resulted in my understanding that peace, and happiness for me come from serving God, and not materialistic pursuit.

The search for the intersection of my personal perspective, and the context in which I have been called to minister has been a

painful growth experience. The very nature of self-examination exposes one to the reality of personal evolution through life experience.

My life experience in diverse racial and cultural contexts has highlighted for me our lack of understanding of the different approaches people have to life's challenges. I feel strongly that understanding leads to tolerance, which is a giant step toward acceptance of human-kind's diversity.

The church context in which I have served, and now serve, aside from personal lessons learned, and being learned, have something in common. That is, when people of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds come together in transitional church situations, the more diverse their worship tradition the deeper the potential for conflict. The usual result is that one group or the other reaches a point of non-acceptance, and leaves the fellowship. I feel that if an effort is made to understand each other's worship traditions, we can gather together congregations of greater diversity. My life experience, present context, and this model in ministry project affords an opportunity to put this process into action.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In researching material that would provide an understanding of edification in the gathered worship setting, and that evaluated the difference between Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregation's worship modalities, I found that there was a limited amount of empirical study of the effect of edification in the body of Christ.

Most of the material dealing with 'transitional churches' focused on church growth issues, and methods of maintaining existing small congregations without grappling with racial, ethnic, and cultural difference in congregational worship.

Material was sought that looked at the difference between worship and edification. There was a plethora of writings on worship; in most cases, however, edification was not treated as an independent issue. I found little side-by-side comparison of Afro-centric and Euro-centric worship modalities. Therefore, I endeavored to select material, when possible, from Afro-centric and

Euro-centric authors to provide a balance of views. With respect to edification, most of the material was found in the few articles cited.

I used three methodologies of edification (preaching, music, and emotional tone), in this model in ministry research project. Attempts were made to review material that reflected racial, ethnic, and cultural differences in edification. This proved to be a difficult task. I found that much of the material on methodologies of edification in Euro-centric churches tended to be general in nature, with occasional comparison to the Catholic church. Afro-centric empirical studies were some-what more specific regarding edification modalities. Since observing and understanding the differences, rather than analyzing the difference in methodologies of edification, was the objective of the project; the literature utilized focused more on Afro-centric modalities.

In reviewing literature concerning the body of Christ, I felt the need to explore material regarding the use of the gifts of the Spirit in gathered worship. I looked for innovative approaches to utilizing the gifts of the Spirit both for personal interaction as well as in the pursuit of the goals of corporate worship.

Finally, material was sought to present a view of diversity, and its acceptance in Euro-centric and Afro-centric settings. This also was a difficult task. First, because so little was available; and

second, because the existing writing with one exception did not attempt a one-on-one comparison.

The following review of literature is organized in the order of the above presentation, and is not considered by any means exhaustive.

The Transitional Church

Walter E. Ziegenhals, in Urban Churches in Transition,[1] looks at transitional churches through the model of a Chicago area church as it is moved through the process of transition. Ziegenhals points out the inherent bias that he, as a 'white Protestant male' brings to his writing. There is more movement in this book toward abdication than toward assimilation. I strongly concur, however, with Ziegenhals' assessment of the failure of churches to early recognize that their community is in transition, because to admit the "possibility - or probability - of racial change in their own area strikes most churches as self-defeating - the beginning of the end." [2] The limited view of the importance of the Black church in its community's development expressed by Ziegenhal as one that "no longer fulfills the requirements of a religious group," and is , "no

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[1] Walter E. Ziegenhals, Urban Churches in Transition (New York: Pilgrim Press, New York, 1978).

longer a base from which the God-centered life can be lived in the secular world"[3] is indicative of the general lack of understanding of how the church functions in an Afro-centric setting as opposed to a Euro-centric setting. Nevertheless, this book is very informative about the issues raised by a church in transition, and offers creative ways to accomplish abdication.

Worship

In its opening article penned by Frank E. Smith, Worship in the Presence of God,[4] edited by Smith and David C. Lachman, the tone is set for this volume on worship, which is Euro-centric and Reformed in its leaning. Smith sees worship a prescribed by God and having a definite 'regulative principle of worship' which "teaches that with regard to worship whatever is commanded in Scripture is required, and whatever is not commanded is forbidden." [5]

The theme of worship being special, dialogical, and prescribed is interwoven throughout the articles in this collection. Consequently, there seems no room for diversity in the worship

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[2] Ziegenhals, 15.

[3] Ziegenhals, 33.

[4] David Lachman and Frank J. Smith, eds., Worship in the Presence of God (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992).

[5] Lachman, 16-17.

service as far as racial, ethnic or cultural variations are concerned. Rather, Smith leaves the impression, both in his own writing (four of 19 articles) and in the articles selected in this book, that the Reformed position on worship he embraces is the only valid worship modality. In my experience, I have found this position to be all too prevalent in so-called main-line denominations. However, this book was helpful in delineating the Euro-centric position on preaching, music and, to some extent, emotional tone.

I found Pentecostal Worship,[6] by Gary D. Erickson, to be a breath of fresh air on the topic of worship. Erickson gives a Pentecostal view of worship, which is full of open discussion of diverse worship practices among Pentecostal congregations. The start of worship in the Old Testament is quickly tied to the New Testament church practices which carry through to present day modalities. I was particularly influenced by Erickson's inclusion of preaching, teaching, fellowship, evangelism, and edification as aspects of Christian worship.[7]

Erickson's clear understanding of the function of the indwelling Spirit in worship is important to my study. Recognizing the indwelling Spirit as the focus of worship helps to understand the

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[6] Gary D. Erickson, Pentecostal Worship A Biblical and Practical Approach (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1989).

difference between worship and edification. Erickson sees ministering to others outside of one's needs as divided into three distinct areas - evangelism, edification, and worship. He calls worship a direct ministry, while evangelism and edification are indirect. Evangelism reaches out; edification is ministry to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Worship, says Erickson, is direct because it is an exchange between the individual and God alone. [8] This theory is the center-piece of my project.

This book engaged worship with a broadened understanding of its biblical underpinnings. While the fundamental Pentecostal teachings are in some instances at odds with my theology (in some of Erickson's views on the restrictions of dance for example),[9] as a whole, all methodologies of edification are clearly explained, and dealt with. This is a thought-provoking book.

Wyatt Tee Walker, in The SOUL of Black Worship,[10] sees in Black worship three primary 'support' systems - preaching, praying, and singing - and deals with each in light of the Afro-centric experience. Of particular use in gaining insight for this project was Walker's view of preaching as the literature of Afro-centric

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[7] Erickson, 27.

[8] Erickson, 48-51.

[9] Erickson, 120-127.

experience and his understanding of Black preaching as aimed "primarily at the ear as the route to the mind."[11] This a fundamental difference between Afro-centric and Euro-centric preaching, the latter being aimed at the mind as a route to the heart. This brings to light the difference between participation and observation.

I agree with Walker's assessment that prayer is a pillar of support in the Black church. Although the differences in approach to prayer between Afro-centric and Euro-centric churches are many-faceted and in some instances glaring, I felt that the subject of prayer as a methodology of edification requires its own study. I came to that decision early on when I thought of the implications of just a few differences. For example - who prays in the church (the pastor, the deacon, lay-persons) - what are the implications of written versus orally composed prayers.

To argue with Walker's choice of singing as the third support of Black worship, given his knowledge of music in the Black church, would be akin to telling Moses how to handle flood control.

After discussing the theology of African American worship, Melva Wilson Costen, in African American Christian Worship[12] ,

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[10] Wyatt Tee Walker, The Soul of Black Worship (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1984).

[11] Walker, The Soul, 13.

[12] Melva Wilson Costen, African American Christian Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

recites the history of the evolution of worship in Afro-centric congregations. Her historical perspective and detailed description of worship modalities paints a vivid picture of early practice and its origin. It was interesting to learn of the original use of 'call to worship' to inform slaves of the secret place of worship without alerting the slave-master to this forbidden activity. Costen also acknowledges the importance, albeit not directly, of edification in slave worship practice. She writes, that with or without a preacher, the gathered worshippers included a time of corporate support and reconnecting with the community. "The gathering community greeted and welcomed each other, shaking hands, embracing, and offering expressions of joy as worship began."[13] This is the same type of activity Paul alludes to in his writings to the early church, urging them to edify (build-up) the body of Christ.

Costen covers all aspects of early Black church practice, from baptism to burial. The various types of music and their use are also carefully covered. A richly annotated bibliography makes this work valuable and useful to all who desire to understand diversity in Black worship practice.

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[13] Costen, 41.

Edification

Howard Marshall gives historical perspective to early church worship in his article "How far did the early Christians worship God?" in Churchman.[14] Starting from a thorough discussion of the lack of use of the term 'worship' in the New Testament, Marshall effectively argues that "what goes on in a Christian meeting as specifically for the purpose of 'worship' is without New Testament precedent."[15] He then moves through what did occur at early Christian meetings, contending that "the main emphasis in church meetings lay upon what the members did for one another in virtue of their charismatic endowments from God."[16]

What Marshall brings to this project is his conclusion that in Paul's use of the 'body' as a description of the body of Christ "the concept of the body is not used to portray the church meeting as a means of worshipping God; the thought is of the parts of the body receiving strength from God and serving one another in an organic whole."[17]

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[14] Howard Marshall, "How far did the early Christians worship God?," Churchman, IX, (1985).

[15] Marshall, 220.

[16] Marshall, 223.

Marshall's article clearly separates edification from worship, focusing attention on what was occurring within the body of Christ in early Christian gatherings. The implications for application to today's church is "to give the individual members of the congregation the opportunity to exercise the gifts of the Spirit, to receive from one another, and to show love to one another.[18]

David Peterson, in "The Biblical Concept of Edification," Church, Worship and the Congregation,[19] established for me the basis for looking at the effect of the difference in edification between Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregations. He stated: "Numerical growth is related directly to the establishing and encouraging of those who are already believers. [*as*] Acts 20:232 indicates . . . the 'word of his grace' is the means by which a congregation is built up and given 'inheritance' among all those who are sanctified.'[20]

The congregation itself is the engine of spiritual and physical growth through edification. This principle encourages believers to look at individuals and their assimilation into their church gathering

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[17] Marshall, 226.

[18] Marshall, 228.

[19] David Peterson, "The Biblical Concept of Edification," in Church, Worship and the Local Congregation, ed. B.G. Webb (Home Bush West, Australia, Laprip Books, 1987).

[20] Peterson, 46.

rather than think in terms of groups. What becomes important is what gifts of the Spirit that individual brings to the congregation, rather than what their racial, ethnic, or cultural roots are. Peterson states: "the plan of God is to build or establish a people amongst whom he will dwell forever in the perfection of the new creation. This work of construction in which Jews and Gentiles are wonderfully united is achieved by the Messiah in his death and resurrection, and by the consequent pouring out of his Spirit on his people."[21]

For Peterson, edification occurs when Christians gather and minister among themselves in love, utilizing the gifts of the Spirit God has placed among them. The stress here is not on individual growth to maturity, but on individuals learning to live together in unity.

Gene A. Getz, in BUILDING UP ONE ANOTHER,[22] provides a guide to the study and use of edification in a local congregational setting. The material is strictly Bible-based, and uses Paul's writings to support a firm understanding of the working of edification in the body of Christ. Getz states that foreign gatherings of the body are unknown to us; therefore, the body best functions and is

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[21] Peterson, 48.

[22] Gene A. Getz, Building Up One Another (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986,).

most effective in local settings among "bodies of believers who know each other well and who are able, on the basis of that knowledge, to minister to each other."[23] This teaching tool leads believers through the process of edification, with chapters on 'building-up' each other in love in order that the body of Christ may function more smoothly.

In "Further Reflection on Worship in the New Testament", and article in The Reformed Theological Review,[24] David Peterson stresses the importance of using one's gifts for the benefit of the body of Christ. The church is not an ordinary gathering like a club, but rather a functioning conduit for God's work in the world. Peterson sums up his belief in the importance of edification with his understanding of Romans 12, as indicating that "worship pleasing to God in the eschatological age is offered by those who continue to allow themselves to be transformed by the renewal of their mind, exercising their gifts in the service of the Christian fellowship and manifesting love in all their relationships."[25]

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[23] Getz, 17.

[24] David Peterson, "Further Reflections on Worship in the New Testament," The Reformed Theological Review, XLIV (January-April, 1985).

[25] Peterson, Further Reflections, 27.

Methodologies of Edification

The choice of preaching, music and emotional tone as the methodologies of edification that would be considered in this study was primarily based on Walker's of The Soul of Black Worship.[26] The clear and concise explanation of the use of "preaching, praying and singing . . . as the essential ingredients" [27] of Black worship served as authoritative basis for consultation during discussions. Unfortunately, no such guide was found that made a general overall analysis of Euro-centric worship practices. Prayer was not used as one of the methodologies of edification because it is not as readily observable or open to analysis in context as preaching, music and emotional tone.

As previously mentioned, material relating to preaching, music and emotional tone specifically as methodologies of edification is scant. The following books did shed light on understanding what occurs in worship primarily, from the Afro-centric church perspective.

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[26] Walker, The Soul.

[27] Wyatt Tee Walker, Somebody's Calling My Name (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979), as quoted in The Soul of Black Worship, 3.

Preaching

Joseph A. Johnson's The Soul of the Black Preacher [28] was useful because of the understanding it offers about the Black preachers role in the community through close identification with the needs, and desires of the congregation. Although Johnson writes with a touch of bitterness, he nevertheless clearly shows the development of Black preachers, and their importance in the community. What I gained from Johnson's book was an interpretation of a biblical explanation of the misuse of Christian doctrine relative to race relations.

Henry Krabbendam's article entitled "Worship and Preaching" published in Worship in the Presence of God, views the place of preaching as narrow in its interpretation and presentation and leading into "true and full worship of God."[29] Krabbendam takes preaching through its six stages of focus, scripture, preparation, preacher, proclamation, audience and God. While Krabbendam acknowledges that preaching is "edificational,"[30] there seems no room for addressing the present-day context of racial, ethnic or

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[28] Joseph A. Johnson, The Soul of the Black Preacher(Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971).

[29] Lachman, 261.

[30] Lachman, 169.

cultural injustice prevalent in society. Krabbendam's model for preaching may function well in contexts that seek forgiveness in the preached word, but not in those contexts that seek justice in the practice of Christianity.

Music

It is not possible to discuss music in the Afro-centric church without leaning on the pillar of its empirical expansion, Wyatt Tee Walker's Somebody's Calling My Name.[31] In my opinion, his contribution has fostered wide understanding of the role of Black church music in the sociological underpinning of the development of the African-American community. Familiar hymns come alive with the historical explanation Walker provides. This book has become a standard resource for the interpretation, understanding, use, and position of music in many African-American churches.

This preceding tome, and Walkers following series, Spirits That Dwell In Deep Woods I, II AND III,[32] say what needs to be said about the development and history of music in the Black church.

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[31] Walker, Somebody's Calling.

[32] Wyatt Tee Walker, Spirits That Dwell In Deep Woods I (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1987).

Wyatt Tee Walker, Spirits That Dwell In Deep Woods II (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1988).

`Wendell J. Mapson, in The Ministry of Music in the Black Church [33] discusses the role of music in the church from the perspective of what has happened to 'Black church music' over the years. Mapson calls to question the place of some 'music' in the church and provides useful guidelines for music, the pastor, music directors, and choirs. This book takes a solid look at the actual use of music in the context of various Afro-centric worship services in its traditional and cultural motifs.

The stilted nature of music in the Euro-centric church is more clearly understood after reading Frank J. Smith's article in Worship in the Presence of God.[34] Smith sees specific rules of scripture that apply to the singing of praise in the church, and that singing is a 'distinct element' of worship that is "governed strictly by the rules which apply to it, and not necessarily by the considerations which inform the conduct of the rest of the elements of worship."[35] If that does not make Smith's position clear, he further offers ". . . there is no indication that each culture should develop its own way of worship. . . . Now that the Church is One, there is no evidence to

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Wyatt Tee Walker, Spirits That Dwell In Deep Woods III (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1991).

[33] Wendell J. Mapson, The Ministry of Music in the Black Church (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1984).

[34] Lachman.

suggest that she (sic) should be held captive by cultural forms, and certainly not by forms which God has not authorized."[36]

Where is recognition of the reality of a multicultural world view in worship? Certainly, God in the creation of such diversity in humanity will allow the use of that diversity in the worship of God. I can, at least, agree with Smith's observation that: "One of the effects of singing in worship is that of edification." [37]

Emotional Tone

James F. White follows the history of seven 'mainline' denominations in Protestant Worship, Traditions in Transition [38]. The historical narration of development of these denominations from their European beginnings, is full of facts relating to the response each had to the changing view of the church in its early American development. Notably absent is an account of worship practices during slavery. White fails to acknowledge the contributions of the Black church to Protestant worship in America. In fact, White's

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[35] Lachman, 193.

[36] Lachman, 197. A more complete understanding of Smith's position can be gleaned from Appendix B of Worship in the Presence of God .

[37] Lachman, 200.

[38] James F. White, Protestant Worship, Traditions in Transition (Louisville: Westminister/John Knox Press, 1989).

narrative is so remiss in this respect that it calls into question the limited undocumented information provided about the role of Black worship in the 'mainline' church. For example, White mentions Richard Allen and the start of the African Methodist Episcopal church without noting the reason for its beginning. Nevertheless, this book provided guidance regarding the development of worship practices, and as White puts it, 'the style' of worship in Euro-centric churches.

Two books previously cited, Wyatt Tee Walker, The Soul of Black Worship, [39] and Melva Wilson Costen, African American Christian Worship,[40] give an excellent overview of the emotional tone of Afro-centric worship.

The body of Christ

The introduction to Robert L. Randall's book What People Expect From Church,[41] lists six relational needs people seek in a church. In responding to these six needs, Randall offers eight chapters on the yearning of people in the church to understand - to belong - for hope - for preaching that reaches out - for teaching that connects - for an administration that cares - and, for congregational

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[39] Walker, The Soul.

[40] Costen.

life that embraces. In addressing each of these needs, Randall concisely, and directly connects to people's needs with practical commentary. For example, Randall states that people yearn to belong to a church because, if they were "fortunate enough to enjoy supportive ties with others in the past, they look to the church for those normal, ongoing experiences of belonging that make life enjoyable, and endurable."[42] The statement itself contains ideas for solution. While not specifically stating edification as its aim, the value of this book as a guide to edifying the body of Christ could be useful.

The use of the gifts of the Spirit in edifying the body of Christ is clearly illustrated in Bert Dominy's article, "Paul and Spiritual gifts: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 12-14" in , Southwestern Journal of Theology.[43] In the article, Dominy traces the application of Paul's teachings on this subject, from the nature and source of spiritual gifts through the variety given, to love as the medium of expression and the functioning of the methodologies of edification of the body of Christ in praxis.

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[41] Robert L. Randall, What People Expect From Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

[42] Randall, 27.

[43] Bert Dominy, "Paul and Spiritual Gifts: Reflections on I Corinthians 12-14." Southwestern Journal of Theology, XXVI (Fall 1983).

The backdrop of this article is Paul's writing on the subject of speaking in tongues in the Corinthian church. Paul uses the opportunity to express his teaching on the use of the gifts of the Spirit in the gathering of the body of Christ. Dominy summarizes by stating that the gifts of the Spirit are "inclusive, not exclusive," and sets the criteria for evaluation of the gifts: "(1) a clear witness to the lordship of Christ; (2) humble service rather than self-aggrandizement; (3) the spirit of Christian love; (4) the edification of the congregation." [44]

I found concise suggestions for understanding and responding to diversity in the church in Stephen Kliewer's How to Live with Diversity in the Local Church.[45] The book provides 12 strategies for recognizing and incorporating diversity in ministry. Kliewer makes it clear that utilizing the variety of talents and traditions found in diverse congregational settings is something that has to be thought out and planned for. Encouraging sharing and exercising the gifts of the Spirit in the edification of the body of Christ will require use of some of the strategies Kliewer provides. This book is necessary reading in the area of application of the principle of edification.

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[44] Dominy, 67-68.

[45] Stephen Kliewer, How to Live with Diversity in the Local Church (New York: Alban Institute Publication, 1987).

Finally, from the second paragraph of the introduction to Anthony T. Evan's Are Blacks Spiritually Inferior to Whites[46] a gantlet of challenge to the "myth" of the "supposed spiritual inferiority of Black people," is laid down. Evan's maintains that "this myth has kept the White church from sufficiently appreciating the massive contributions the Black church has made to a true understanding of biblical Christianity and from incorporating those contributions into its own ecclesiology."[47]

What Evan's accomplishes in this book is to place the contributions of the Black church at the center of the development of the practice of biblical Christianity, a move he feels will help resolve the problem of race relations in the Christian church in America. While Evan's style is sometimes brash, the book is nevertheless a test of one's willingness to listen to painful truth. The useful documentation and references can form the basis for further study.

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[46] Anthony T. Evans, Are Blacks Spiritually Inferior To Whites (Wenonah, NJ: Renaissance Productions, Inc., 1992).

[47] Evans, 7.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Recently I observed a sign in the window of a popular local night club that blared, GOSPEL BRUNCH - 11 A M SUNDAY - ALL ARE WELCOME. I presume that if it catches on the proprietors will add the words - AND WORSHIP SERVICE. Clearly, what constitutes worship is increasingly open-ended.

There is a widening gap between the biblical basis of New Testament worship and its public perception. Howard Marshall, in an insightful article on the subject of Christian worship, states that general misuse of the word worship has led to a "fundamental misunderstanding of what ought to be at the centre of Christian meetings and . . . a serious shift in practice from what ought to be happening when we gather together."[1]

For Christians, religious worship is an individual's act of yielding in ardent contemplation of God through the Christ event.

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[1] Howard Marshall, "How Far Did the Early Christians Worship God?," Churchman IX, (1985): 217.

Although such worship may sometimes take place in community, it is nonetheless an individual act. For example, music is not the worship, what is taking place between the individual and God, within the individual's 'temple' is the actual worship. Christians should worship God in every aspect of their lives, by individually emulating the life of God's only begotten son, Jesus Christ.

The primary purpose of the gathering of the body of Christ is to edify those gathered by fellowship, sharing, and exercising the gifts of the Spirit that God has graciously bestowed among them.

The scriptural basis for worship in the body of Christ is all-inclusive without reference to racial, ethnic, sociological or cultural modality of worship. Too often the flocking sounds of denomination drown out the theologically sound basis of Christian worship. If we continue to prepare ourselves to fly in formation, we may not hear the song of those who may prompt us to soar to new heights of spiritual awareness. There is more than enough room to accommodate our diversity while celebrating our commonality in Christ. It is only through sharing and exercising all of the gifts God has scattered among God's diverse children, that this vast reservoir of talent can be tapped to develop beloved community.

In this chapter, a theological foundation for the model in ministry project is laid, beginning with a discussion of worship.

A biblical basis for the body of Christ is followed by a review of edification. Each method of edification observed in the model - preaching, music, and emotional tone- is rooted in a biblical base. The chapter ends with a look at spiritual gifts as a means of unity.

What Is Worship?

Worship is an individual's act of yielding in ardent contemplation of God through the Christ event. We bring to our worship of God all of our varied ethnic, racial, cultural, and sociological differences, along with a myriad of other idiosyncrasies. Nevertheless, the biblical reference to our worship is the same- we are required to yield our body to God's service.[2] This yielding is to include both the body[3] and the mind.[4] In that way our total existence is yielded to God's service, since the mind conceives the actions of the body and the body then carries out the conceived action.

Yielding is not simply a willingness to do a specific thing, but the desire to do whatever God commands one to do. For the Christian, this yielding is constant, the focus of all one does. Paul, in Romans. 1:1, calls on Christians to "by the mercies of God, . . .

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[2] Rom. 6.13

[3] Rom. 12.1

present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Paul explains In the balance of Romans 12 that "worship pleasing to God in the eschatological age is offered by those who continue to allow themselves to be transformed by the renewal of their mind, exercising their gifts in the service of the Christian fellowship, and manifesting love in all their relationships."[5] Paul asks us here to do three things in worship. First, be transformed by the renewal of our mind. Second, exercise our gift(s) in service to each other. Third, manifest love in all our relationships.

This yielding, which we do as individuals, at all times, takes place in community as well. David Peterson suggests that exercising and sharing the gifts of the Spirit in a corporate worship setting may be considered worship provided it is for the benefit of others, and to the glory of God. Congregational meetings do provide opportunities to serve God, just as some people have opportunity in their daily life. "Nevertheless, such worship is clearly to be expressed at all times and in all places by the Christian."[6]

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[4] Rom. 12.2

[5] Peterson, David, "Further Reflections on Worship in the New Testament," The Reformed Theological Review 94, (January-April 1985): 35.

[6] Peterson, 38.

Our individual worship changes us, renews our minds and opens us to further indwelling of the Holy Spirit, infusing us with spiritual power that is our inheritance as children of God. Paul writes, in Ephesians 4, that we "put off concerning the former conversation (life) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" and that we, "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We should endeavor to emulate the work and walk of Jesus Christ in all aspects of our lives, striving to come to perfection in the knowledge that we are children of God.

Individual worship keeps our lives focused on God through Christ, so that the indwelling Spirit of God can endue us with spiritual power in order that we may more effectively utilize the gifts of the Spirit to the edification of the body of Christ.

> Spiritual power has many points of similarity to electric force, and just as a receptive body can be charged with electricity by being insulated and brought into contact with some source of electric energy, so we can be charged with the energy of God by the insulation from the world and contact with Himself that is found in worship. As we worship God His power flows into us. Nights spent in contact with God, our faces before Him in worship, are followed by days of power in contact with men. One great secret of the lack of power in service today is the absence of worship in our relations to God Himself.[7]

The body of Christ

The use of the word church in the gospels is found in Matthew, and occurs only three times. In the first instance, Jesus is asking Peter who he thinks Jesus is. To Peter's correct reply, Jesus responds, ". . . thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[8] In the second occurrence, Jesus is talking about how to deal with an offended brother and mentions church twice. After prescribing a procedure for the situation, Jesus says, "if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." It is clear from these scriptures that Jesus intended some kind of fellowship for gathering and dealing with issues that might arise among believers. "This concept of fellowship expresses the thought of a two-way relationship between God and man and between man and God. . . . They experience his power and love both in their individual experience and in their corporate experience, and they respond with prayer and praise."[9]

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[7] Torrey, R. A., What the Bible Teaches (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1933), 478. This book was helpful in providing scripture references and categories of worship.

[8] Matt. 16: 18

[9] Marshall, 225.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus' intention seems to describe something different from the temple as a place of worship predominant in his day. In response to the reaction of certain Jews at the cleansing of the temple, Jesus said, "destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" John writes in the verse following: "But he spake of the temple of his body."[10] Paul, in Ephesians 2, reminds believers why and how they became members of the household of God, and building blocks in a "holy temple in the Lord."

> 11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
> 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world;
> 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
> 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;
> 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;
> 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby;
> 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

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[10] Jno. 2: 19-21

> 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
> 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,
> 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
> 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord;
> 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. [11]

Early Christians were meeting for worship in the temple as evidenced by the encounter John and Peter had with the beggar on their way to prayer. It is reasonable to assume that the pattern they followed reflected their Jewish backgrounds. Roger Beckwith , in The Daily and Weekly Worship of the Primitive Church,[12] details the character and composition of Jewish and Christian worship services in the first century. Beckwith highlights the ministry of the Word, the Eucharist and the Eucharist prayer. A good grasp of the transition period in Jewish and Christian worship can be gained from this work.[13]

Something else was occurring in these worship services that provoked controversy. The need for conflict resolution and

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[11] Eph. 2: 4-22

[12] Roger T. Beckwith, "The Daily and Weekly Worship of the Primitive Church: Part II", The Evangelical Quarterly , 56:3, (July).

interpretation of developing doctrine is replete in Paul's writings. With all of Paul's discussion of gifts of the Spirit, and other issues, there is no evidence that supports worship as the primary aim of the gathering of early Christians. Paul Banks sums up this lingering question:

> One of the most puzzling features of Paul's understanding of ekklesia for his contemporaries, whether Jews or Gentiles, must have been his failure to say that a person went to church primarily to 'worship'. Not once in all his writings does he suggest that this is the case. Indeed it could not be, for he held a view of 'worship' that prevented him from doing so...
>
> Since all places and times have now become the venue for worship, Paul cannot speak of Christians assembling in church distinctively for this purpose. They are already worshipping God, acceptably or unacceptably, in whatever they are doing. While this means that when they are in church they are worshipping as well, it is not worship but something else that marks off their coming together from everything else that they are doing.[14]

As Christians we gather to edify, to 'build up' the body of Christ. ". . . whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.[15]

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[13] Beckwith, 139-158.

[14] R. Banks, "Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting," Exeter, (1980): 91f. quoted in Peterson, David, Churchman, IX, (1985): 227.

[15] 1 Thes. 5: 8-11

Edification

David Peterson, in The Biblical Concept of Edification [16], states that "numerical growth is related to establishing and encouraging those who are already believers. Acts 20:32 indicates more specifically that 'the word of His grace' is the means by which a congregation is built up, and given the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."[17]

It behooves Christians to move from concern about 'numbers' to concern about 'acts,' since what is done regarding the edification of existing believers in the gathered church has more to do with the spiritual growth of the individual, and the body of Christ. Building up or edifying the body of Christ is accomplished through the sharing and exercising of the gifts of the Spirit that God has in God's wisdom, placed in a particular group of gathered believers.

Paul tells us specifically what the purpose of these gifts is:

> 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers;
> 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;

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[16] David Peterson, "The Biblical Concept of Edification," in Church Worship and the Local Congregation , ed., B. G. Webb (Home Bush West, Australia, Laprip Books, 1987)

[17] Peterson, 46.

> 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'
> 14 That we hence forth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
> 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ;
> 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.[18]

God has given gift(s) to each believer, and gathers those individual gifts together as needed in the body of Christ. Those who put upon God the need to send only those with gifts that are like us, that is, of the same racial, ethnic or cultural ilk, in a sense limit God. Thus, they constrict the growth of the body of Christ.

I strongly concur with Peterson's interpretation of verse 16, that the body causes the growth of itself through the edification that occurs within the body of Christ. The body does this because Christ is at work 'fitting and joining the whole body together.' Christ provides sustenance to the body 'through every contact' or 'mutual touch of the parts of the body'.[19]

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[18] Eph. 4:12-16

[19] Peterson, 50.

Peterson points out that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14, "suggests that edification involves ministry to the congregation as congregation, and not simply as a collection of individuals. More precisely, the very act of ministering the truth to one another should be an exercise in love: only when a church is functioning in this way can it be said that it is being edified."[20]

Nevertheless, all of the participants in the body should utilize their gifts for the mutual building of the entire body, that is to say, a gift of the Spirit from God to believer establishes a relationship from believer to God and believer to believer. Evangelist efforts on the part of believers fuel the expansion of the body.

Marshall says this three-way movement was at work in the early church's meetings, and that the "primary element is the God-man movement, downward rather than upward, in which God comes to His people, and uses his human servants to convey his salvation to them, to strengthen and upbuild them."[21]

..."Church meetings are for the benefit of the congregation and so indirectly for the glory of God. . . . since ministry is exercised between persons, the church meeting has the character of fellowship in which the keynote is mutual love. The symbol of the church,

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[20] Peterson, 52.

[21] Marshall, 227.

therefore, is not simply an upward arrow from man to God, nor simply a downward arrow from God to man, but rather a triangle representing the lines of grace coming down from God to his people, the flow of grace from person to person, and the response of thanks and petition to God."[22] In short, God gives gift(s) to the believer, the believer shares those gifts in the body, and that act of sharing and exercising those gifts is the edification that results in both individual growth and the growth of the body of Christ.

Peterson's conclusion aptly reflects my conviction:

> The apostle characteristically uses the terminology of edification to oppose individualism, either in the ethical sphere or in the sphere of congregational ministry. His concern is that Christians should strengthen and encourage one another in faith and love, always having in view God's purpose for his people collectively. In contrast with contemporary secular and religious usage Paul's teaching about edification takes on an important theological dimension as he relates his exhortations to the saving work of Christ and to the doctrine of the church. Although edification is a principle that should govern the thinking and behaviour of Christians in all circumstances, Paul's reference is usually in the activities of Christian assembly. When Christians gather together to minister to one another the truth of God in love the church is manifested, maintained and advanced in God's way. Here is the situation in which edification essentially and fundamentally takes place.[23]

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[22] Marshall, 227.

[23] Peterson, 54,55.

Methodologies of Edification

Having established a difference between worship and edification in the body of Christ, we now turn to the methodologies of edification. In the course of this study I noted that what most people observe as different between Afro-centric and Euro-centric worship is the process of edifying. That is, for the purposes of this section, the methods by which encouragement of intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement in the body of Christ is accomplished. This process of edification can take place through all of the human senses; therefore, as we gather we should be prepared to be sensitive to the cries of need from others. This requires we be attentive to the sometimes subtle signals others send in interacting and communicating with us.

The three areas observed in this model in ministry project - preaching, music, and emotional tone - involve two modes of communicating - seeing and listening/hearing.

In listening, we pay attention to sounds, staying alert and receptive to catch an *expected* sound. Hearing is the act or a single instance of carefully listening, thereby being made aware by the ear. It seems clear enough that listening and hearing are not the same thing. Yet, most of us travel life's road consistently confusing the

two. Much of the time we experience the sounds around as a TV tuned to nothing in particular; merely there to provide the comfort of canned community. It is important to know the difference between listening and hearing, and to individually develop each. It is said of some people that they are great conversationalists when what they are in reality are great listeners. They hear what people want them to listen to while listening to what people may not want them to hear, and they respond to the need of others accordingly. Listening can sometimes be a boring process, especially if one is full of the excitement of self or have become conditioned in their listening to hear only the *expected* sound.

I am reminded of the couple rocking on their front porch in perpetual retirement. The male half of the marriage reflecting on how kindly his wife had been in spite of his unkindness, blurts, "Maw, I dearly loves you." Maw automatically replies, "Paw, I despises you too!"

In edifying one another in the body of Christ, we need to hear and listen to the sounds of theological insight with which God surrounded us during the various methodologies of edification in order to grow and share with others.

Seeing in the context of edification is having and

developing the power of insight, and the ability to communicate and recreate that effect on heart, mind and soul. It is in this way we move ourselves and others to reflect and gain insight - to see something more, something new. There are many ways in which we can attempt to convey what we have experienced through 'seeing'. For example:

Picture of the elderly couple who come as they always come to the church, each not too far from the side of the other. But this Sunday a sunbeam penetrates the window, passing through the hand of Jesus and glistens in unison on the top of the couple's chrome canes, which hang on the pew, This deposits a sparkle uniformly in their eyes. Does that convey togetherness under the blessing of God? Will some other couple react more positively to each other after viewing this scene?

Most often we resort to story in an attempt to help people see what we experience in the brevity of theological insight. Sometimes this works and sometimes it does not. For instance:

Some time ago I was drawn to an enlarged photograph of two young boys. One was about four years of age, and displayed a quizzical , semi-bewildered look. The other was

around eight years old, and appeared intense, involved, and engrossed with the scene they were viewing. The pathos of the environment and the boys faces affected me deeply. Then, I was told that they were watching a drunken man as he was arrested for vagrancy on a life-worn Baltimore street. The change in my being, all that comprises me, experiences, sights, sounds and understanding of those circumstances, combined to plunge me for an instance in the dark depths of depression at the thoughts of those young boys. I feel there is no way I can make you feel what I felt with words. Yet, I attempt to help you understand so that maybe it will do to you what it did to me - freeze-frame some point in life so it can be looked at it, felt and understood. In a sense, I wish to actually have you experience the point in my life that was freeze-framed and I saw, felt and experienced Christ in me. Ultimately and ideally, that is the desired effect of edification.

Obviously, there are methodologies of edification beyond the three selected for this model in ministry project. Preaching, music, and emotional tone were selected because they can be readily and unobtrusively observed, do not generally tend to lay doctrinal interpretation and, of course, because of the time and space constrains of this study.

Following is a brief biblical foundation for each of the three methodologies of edification chosen.

Preaching

> How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed! And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard!
> And how shall they hear without a preacher! [24]

There is no higher calling nor responsibility God has placed on humanity than that of proclaiming the Gospel of the Cross and Resurrection. The following three principles have evolved to form my understanding of the commitment of a preacher of the gospel to his/her call.

The preacher is the creation of the gospel and is to proclaim both the universality and grace of the gospel, as well as represent the incarnation of that grace and universality. The preacher is responsible to the gospel. The preacher's proper relevance lies where the power of the gospel lies. The preacher must be willing to press where people refuse to see themselves in the light of the judgment of God's righteousness. This responsibility to the gospel means the preacher must exhibit a high degree of imaginative power.

In our time, we may need to speak another language than that of the righteousness of God. What that language will be depends on the power conflict of our day which oppose the Christ event. The preacher's task is to undertake the risk of being both imaginative and responsible to the Gospel of the Cross and the Resurrection. For only when one knows that responsibility and imagination must sustain each other can the gospel become a power of God unto salvation in our day.

Recognizing that the acceptance of Christ as one's Lord is God's plan for humanity, and is not only to be proclaimed by God's envoy but also realized by that envoy, is a frightening and sobering realization.

> 17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.
> 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.[25]

Music

> 1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in
> the firmament of his power.
> 2 Praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to

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[24] Rom. 10:14

[25] 1 Cor. 1:17,18

his excellent greatness.
3Praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp.
4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD, Praise ye the Lord.[26]

An argument for a particular type of music being acceptable in the church is unproductive since music as we know it is so new, relatively speaking. From Gregorian chants to gospel, drum to dance, hand clap to classical; I believe all music is valid in worship. Whether it is appropriate to a particular cultural, racial or ethnic group is another question.

There is a gap in approach to the use of music in worship by Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregations. Wyatt Tee Walker, an authority on the history and use of music in the African-American church, strongly states, "that people at worship should be singing the music that relates directly to their social context."[27] On the other hand, Frank J. Smith, writing to return Euro-centric worship to its roots, advocates, "unless and until a contrary position can be shown from Scripture to be correct, then all of us who acknowledge

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[26] Psalm 150

[27] Wyatt Tee Walker, Somebody's Calling My Name, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979), 24.

King Jesus as the only law-giver in Zion must submit to His Word and advocate that only the 150 Psalms be sung in worship."[28]

This model in ministry project sought to foster open minds and understanding hearts on the subject of worship music, and at the same time, recognize its potential volatile nature in transitional congregations.

Emotional Tone

> 20 But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.[29]
>
> 14 And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen epod.
> 15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.[30]
>
> 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.[31]

Emotional tone in worship is how we behave and how we respond to worship elements individually and as a congregation.

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[28] Frank Smith, "Singing of Praise," Worship in the Presence of God (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992), 226.

[29] Hab. 2:20

[30] 2 Sam. 6: 14,15

[31] 1 Cor. 14: 40

Biblically, a wide range of emotion and reaction would seem permissible. That is, whatever takes place under the unction of the Holy Spirit, and is done decently and in order, would seem to be permissible. However, so much of what we do is culturally conditioned that we often may not know how the practice got started or the purpose it served or serves. This project focused on aspects of emotional tone within the Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregations, such as silence, applause, shout, dance, and call/response, with an eye toward recognizing difference in prospective for such cultural practices. My objective was to gain understanding of the historical. traditional and cultural reasoning behind different worship modalities.

Gifts are a Means of Unity

> 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
> 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
> 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and thorough all, and in you all.[32]

God's call to us is that we be one, that we move beyond the walls we erect to separate ourselves one from another. God, through Christ, has broken down those walls of partition to make way for

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[32] Eph. 4: 4-6

embracing and melding of human hearts. The body of Christ joined together in its diverse racial, cultural, ethnic and sociological parts is more than equal to any power this world has wrought.

The spiritual gifts God has graciously given to each member of the body are to be used in love for the edification of the entire body. Such sharing is not limited to the mere exercising of those gifts, it should exhibit the following criteria: "(1) a clear witness to the lordship of Christ; (2) humble service rather than self-aggrandizement; (3) the spirit of Christian love; (4) the edification of the congregation.[33]

If we move beyond our individual bias to a desire to understand and acknowledge our diversity we can celebrate our commonality to the betterment of our community. I believe that process can and should start in our churches, where God 'joins together' those gifts that enhance and edify the whole. The problem is, in a sense we place limits on God by requiring God provide someone with the specific gift our gathered body needs, someone who looks and acts just like us in most, if not all, things. Likewise, some feel that certain gifts are more desirable or more attractive than others. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, makes it clear that spiritual gifts

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[33] Bert Dominy, "Paul and Spiritual Gifts: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 12-14," Southwestern Journal of Theology, XXVI, (Fall 1983): 68.

are of equal value, and that by necessity they function more smoothly in their diversity.

> 12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body , being many, are one body; so also is Christ.
> 13 For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.
> 14 For the body is not one member, but many.[34]

The strength of Paul's example is its clarity in demonstrating that the most effective and efficient body is the one that has all of it's parts properly functioning. This is necessary so that the purpose of God giving gift(s) to every believer 'for the equipping of the saints,[35] for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ', can be accomplished.

I close this chapter with Howard Marshall's thought-provoking conclusion:

> Finally, the elements of fellowship and mutual upbuilding in love need to be brought to the fore. Here we are greatly hampered by the one-man ministry which is still so common. Somehow we need to give the individual members of the congregation the opportunity to exercise the gifts of the Spirit, to receive from one another and to show love to one another. It is not 'leaders in worship' that we need but people who have gifts to share with one another. This clearly does not

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[34] 1 Cor. 12: 12-31

[35] Eph. 4: 12

> mean that we do not want people trained in theology to function in the church or that there is no place for something corresponding to the present-day ministry. It is rather to suggest that we need far more people with some theological training and we need a far wider concept of ministry than is possible so long as we cling to the idea of the 'one man' ministry. In this way we shall come to a fuller appreciation of the nature and activity of the church instead of distorting it by forcing it all into the unnatural mould that we know as 'worship'.[36]

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[36] Howard Marshall, "How far did the early Christians worship God?," Churchman, IX, (1985): 228.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The problem this model in ministry project addressed was that of a church in transition seeking to raise levels of awareness of differences in the edification of the body of Christ between Afro-centric, and Euro-centric congregations of the same denomination. The goal was to form a community worship environment that is open to multiracial, multicultural participation. The aim of this model in ministry was to provide a forum for sharing personal understanding and perspectives of the edification practices of two diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural congregations. The sharing of this learning experience in a group setting began a process of acknowledgment of diversity that led to the desire to collectively celebrate in the community our commonality in Christ.

The selection of a methodology that would encourage an open and frank sharing of viewpoints, yet provide a useful evaluation of the results, was found to be a qualitative research paradigm.

I acknowledge that the qualitative research paradigm is subjective and the ethnographic method when utilizing a participant observer, in particular, is controversial. In Issues in Participant Observation , we find these concerns are stated:

> The overall structure of a participant observation study is almost undefinable, with research design, data collection, data analysis, and write-up activities all proceeding more or less simultaneously. As a consequence of this lack of standardized procedure, many scientists remain unconvinced of the quality of the data and of the empirical conclusions arrived at.[1]

Nevertheless, care was exercised to glean, from recent work in the field of ethnographic research, those aspects of research methodology that were most applicable to the project's needs, as the following discussion demonstrates. The focus of this model in ministry project in this Doctor of Ministry Program was to provide a practical ministry application focused on praxis rather than an inflexible prescribed process. The methodology selected, data collection methods used and reporting venue selected, in my opinion, best suited the needs of this project and indeed, were instrumental in its success. The transferability of this project is enhanced by the flexibility provided by utilization evaluation rather than process focus. Michael Quinn Patton in Utilization Focused

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[1] McCall, George J., and J. L. Simmons, ed., Issues in Participant Observation (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), 77.

Evaluation , indicates the need for, "a comprehensive approach to program assessment that provides an overall framework within which the individuals involved can proceed to develop an evaluation design with a built-in utilization component appropriate to the unique circumstances they encounter."[2]

It is important to note that the researcher's role as participant observer and sole compiler, and interpreter of data reflect the biases, values, and judgment of the researcher. In Chapter One, the participant observer supplied the reader with background information that may be helpful in assessing replication of the model. Since "replicating the uniqueness of a study within a specific context mitigates against replicating it exactly... ... statements about the researcher's positions—the central assumptions, the selection of informants, the biases and values of the researcher—enhance the study's chances of being replicated...."[3]

In this chapter a discussion of the characteristics of the qualitative paradigm, the ethnographic method, and my role as a participant observer, will be followed by a description of the setting,

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[2] Patton, Michael Quinn, Utilization Focused Evaluation , (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1978), 20.

[3] Creswell John W., Research Design Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches (Thousand Oaks, Cal: Sage Publications, 1994), 159.

participants, and process of data collection. Data collection strategies, data analysis procedures, and verification methods will be outlined. Finally, the method of reporting the findings will be stated.

The Qualitative Research Paradigm

In my personal experience, change of perception, and understanding has come through close association and participation in the daily activities of several racial, ethnic, and cultural groups (see chapter 1). There is a process to bringing about this understanding and acknowledgment of diversity in cultural mores. It is an interactive process that requires a close and trusting relationship between the participants.

In their helpful book, Designing Qualitative Research , Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman maintain that qualitative research "entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, values and seeks to discover participants' perspectives on their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, is both descriptive and

analytic, and relies on people's words and observable behavior as the primary data." [4]

This model in ministry project was on target on all five of these points, meeting this criteria in the following ways:

(1) The church gatherings for instruction and discussion of this topic focused on sharing life experiences, intimate feelings and personal perception.

(2) Participants were encouraged to share any point of view with impunity.

(3) As researcher and pastor, the process of developing understanding and sharing perspective was on a horizontal level.

(4) Questions for discussion were designed to elicit responses that were descriptive and open to in-depth analysis.

(5) The source of data was the observed behavior and comments gleaned from group sessions with participants.

Further, the qualitative method is well-suited to the study of problems on which there is little empirical background, where the "researcher wants to focus on the context that may shape the

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[4] Marshall, Catherine, Rossman, Gretchen B., Designing Qualitative Research (Thousand Oaks, Cal: Sage Publications, 1995), 4.

understanding of the phenomenon being studied."[5] In the qualitative paradigm, the researcher can be an integral part of the study, joining in with full knowledge of the other participants. There is great latitude and flexibility in both the collection, and interpretation of data which can be defined during the field study.

Ethnography Research Method

There are different methods of data collection that may be used with the qualitative paradigm. For this study I selected the ethnography method. In the ethnography method the researcher deals with an existing cultural group, participating with and observing them in the course of their normal activities. There is no disruption to the natural course of things; consequently, subtle changes that arise out of one's racial, ethnic and cultural orientation can be observed and commented upon. In short, "ethnography is culture-studying culture."[6] An important reason for employing this method is that it is an "attempt to aid emancipatory goals, negate repressive influences, raise consciousness, and invoke a call to action that potentially will lead to social change."[7]

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[5] Creswell, 2.

[6] Spradley, James P., The Ethnographic Interview (Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1979), 9.

Often things we do habitually become traditions without us understanding the underlying reason why they become tradition. I am reminded of the story of a young girl who, while watching her mother prepare a roast, asked, "Mom, why do you cut off the ends before your put the roast in the pan?" "I don't know," the mother replied, "that's how you grandmother prepared a roast. I'll ask her." She did. The grandmother told her she cut off the ends of the roast because it didn't fit into the old roasting pan she used.

By understanding and acknowledging the racial, ethnic, and cultural underpinnings of the reasons for difference in worship and edification modalities we may find that we can examine some of our own misunderstood practices. We may, at the same time, be more open to share the practices of others because of our awareness and understanding of the role of those practices in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

I chose the ethnographic model of the qualitative paradigm because it best serves these ends.

The Researcher's Role

I have served as pastor of Community Church at the Circle, Mount Vernon, NY, for nearly two years. In that capacity, I have

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[7] Creswell 12.

come to know the participants as members of the congregation, and have interacted with some of them in activities outside of the church setting. We consider ourselves members of a family and support each other in sorrow and in joy. I was a full and open participant in this project, expressing my opinions, stating my biases and sharing my perceptions and understanding. No attempt was made to conceal participation in the doctoral study program or the model in ministry project. I was very much a part of the process of bringing about understanding and acknowledgment of diversity of cultural mores in worship and edification of the body of Christ. I formulated the lesson plans, led the group sessions and conducted interviews, exercising care not to force any shift in understanding but to let it unfold.

In Designing Qualitative Research , Marshall and Rossman begin a convincing discussion of the role of the researcher in qualitative research by stating: "In qualitative studies, the researcher is the "instrument": Her presence in the lives of the participants invited to be a part of the study is fundamental to the paradigm."[8]

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[8] Marshall, 59.

Project Settings

The group sessions and interviews took place at the Community Church at the Circle, in facilities designated for Bible study and other congregational activities. Sessions were held on Wednesday nights, our normal night for Bible study. From 6:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M., prior to most sessions, a meal was provided by one of the participants. The session immediately followed, ending at 8:00 P.M..

Two visits were made to other churches. We visited an African-American church (CHURCH A) located in a urban setting with a congregation of 800 that has held two services on Sundays for over twenty years because of the large number of worshippers. There were over 350 people in attendance the day we visited. Participants also visited a suburban, European-American congregation established in 1896 (CHURCH B); with a membership of 442, there were 82 people in attendance at the worship service we visited.

Participants

There were nineteen participants, not all of whom attended all sessions or made both visits. The project was concerned with changes in understanding and perception in individual participants.

No effort was made to be selective in choosing participants, all were welcome. The mix of participants generally reflected the diversity of the congregation. Interaction and individual discussions among participants occurred outside of the sessions, so that most people were aware of what occurred in meetings they did not attend. Of the nineteen participants, eighteen were members of Community Church and one was an Episcopal church member who liked our worship service and enjoyed our fellowship. The group was comprised of twelve European-Americans, five African-Americans, one Hispanic-American and one of mixed (African-American, Native-American and European-American) ancestry. This group of nineteen came from six different worship traditions: eight Congregationalist; four Catholic; three Baptist; and two with knowledge of Metaphysic principles.

Events

There were ten Bible study sessions held at Community Church at the Circle; along with one visit to CHURCH A, and one visit to CHURCH B. Two debriefing sessions followed these visits. Several weeks later, a final group session was held. In addition, two Sunday sermons preached by me at Community Church at the Circle had direct bearing on this model in ministry project (see Appendix B). The same methodology of data collection was used at each of these events and was captured in the form of personal notes and

observations of the participant observer-researcher. No other data collection methods were utilized.

Processes

The context of this project, Community Church at the Circle, is a small congregation with wide experience in a variety of belief mechanisms, from former Catholic to former practicing metaphysics. The participants first needed to find a comfort level from which to share their diverse viewpoints. Then, a climate for adjustment to a Christ-centered perspective in a group setting was fostered. And lastly, a common standard (biblical basis) of evaluation of worship, edification and the methodologies of edification was established in terms of racial, ethnic, and cultural mores. Several Sunday morning sermons were preached to keep the entire congregation abreast of the basic theological principles that were being discussed at the Bible study sessions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of the utmost importance in the ethnographic method of qualitative research. "When you encourage people to talk to you openly and frankly, you incur serious ethical

obligations to them."[9] Participants in this project were encouraged to share intimate feelings and perceptions with the researcher, and with others in the group. The researcher may have observed or heard comments and reactions that are appropriate in the group setting but that would be uncomplimentary taken out of context. It is the responsibility of the researcher to assure participants that their cooperation will not result in emotional or other harm to them or others. Trust in the researcher led to revelation of material that, though helpful to the goal of the research, may be harmful to the participant. Care must be exercised to protect participants, even if that means "leaving out exciting material from the final report or slightly distorting the results so as to keep people out of trouble. . . however, with some thought you can usually protect individuals and still get your points across." [10]

Participants in group sessions need to realize that, since gatherings are in a sense public, it may not be possible to assure complete anonymity. That does not excuse the researcher from making heroic attempts to protect the rights and privacy of participants in print.

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[9] Rubin, Herbert J., Rubin, Irene S., Qualitative Interviewing The Art of Hearing Data (Thousand Oaks, CAL: Sage Publications, 1995), 93. A useful discussion of ethical obligations in qualitative research is found on pages 93-101 of this book.

James Spadley, in The Ethnographic Interview, writes on the subject of ethical considerations: "Protecting privacy extends far beyond changing names, places, and other identifying features in a final report. These are minimal requirements of anonymity."[11]

Notes and observations of the participant observer are considered to be personal and private, having the same rights of privacy as pastor/congregant counseling sessions.

Data Collection Strategies

The researcher participated fully in the project as observer, interviewer, and sole gatherer of data. The data was gathered at the events listed above, as well as from observations made during chance encounters with participants where topics relevant to the model in ministry project were discussed. The focus of the participant/observer was on the participants, whether contact was individual on in group settings.

An initial survey was given at the first meeting to determine each participant's understanding of the role of the church and its administration. The purpose of the survey was informational and was used to stimulate and focus discussion.

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[10] Rubin, 94.

[11] Spradley, 38.

Data was collected from group sessions from February 2, 1997, to April 9, 1997, and from debriefing meetings following services on Sunday, June 8, 1997, and Sunday, June 22, 1997. The researcher recorded data in note form. The researcher dismissed tape recording as an option at the outset of the project so that open sharing would not be constricted. Several face-to-face interviews took place with some of the participants during July and August 1997.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analysis of data was an ongoing process, taking place after each session in order to pinpoint questions and areas that needed clarification or expansion in the next session. Patton's comments on evaluation of data helped to focus my understanding of the importance of the researcher determining the 'meaning' of a particular observation or comment. Patton writes:

> In evaluation, the answer one hopes for is that "it means something; it tells us something about what to do." For any given set of data the answer depends on who is interpreting the data.
> . . . Too often evaluators and decisionmakers behave as if there is some body of data out there that has only to be collected in order to reveal what it all means, whether or not it works, and whether or not the program is effective.[12]

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[12] Patton, 240.

The guiding principle of this project was to utilize what worked relative to the projects goal of the project. Therefore, the process of analysis of data was basically one of reviewing notes and comments to see if there was a common thread or point of reference. Each participant had, in the group sessions, an opportunity to respond to the comments and statements of others. When these statements bore similar concerns or expressed sentiments adverse to our goal of understanding and acknowledging diversity, the group was generally able to move that participant in a more positive direction. As the study progressed the group became more proficient at this technique. If an individual left the group or was absent more than twice, they were contacted to determine is the absences could be attributed to the sessions.

Classification and coding of data was deemed inapplicable, since responses were weighted individually in terms of whether the comment or observed behavior moved the group toward the goal or away from the goal of understanding and acknowledging differences in methodology of edification. The observations and/or remarks reported were selected based on what best reflected the changes observed in the study group. Such latitude in the selection and reporting is reflected in Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes:

> . . . the ethnographer's assumptions, interests, and theoretical commitments enter into every phase of writing an ethnography and influence decisions that range from selecting which events to write about to those that entail emphasizing one member's perspective on an event over those of others. The process is thus one of reflexive or dialectical interplay between theory and data whereby theory enters in at every point, shaping not only analysis but how social events come to be perceived and written up as data in the first place.[13]

Verification of Data

The primary method of data verification was to involve participants in the validation process by checking key thoughts, perceptions and revelations with other members of the group. Since the nature of qualitative research is fluid and in constant flux, where the group was at the moment was of more relevance than how they got there.

Additional verification took place during individual interviews, since the various scenarios and questions posed were based on key responses, and the researcher's interpretation of those responses, relative to the goal of increasing understanding of diversity in worship and difference in edification of the body of Christ. Statements chosen to be utilized by the researcher in this paper

were discussed and reviewed until a consensus of what occurred in the group session at which the particular statement or observation was made was reached.

Creswell writes in Research Design Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches : "Qualitative researchers have no single stance or consensus on addressing traditional topics such as validity and reliability in qualitative studies."[14] However, this project followed several of Creswell's recommendations regarding internal validity and external validity. With respect to internal validity, participants were involved in the research and there was 'feedback' of key facts to check accuracy of conclusions. It is important to bear in mind that the findings or reporting of this project is not to generalize but to form a unique interpretation of events that occurred.[15]

Report of Findings

A report of findings of this model in ministry project is in the form of ethnographic vignettes. In reporting the findings of this project I want to convey the process of change that encompassed

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[13] Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 167.

[14] Creswell, 157.

[15] Creswell, 158-159.

both the heart and mind of the participants. Such change can be a source of very personal pain, the pain of regret for past thoughts and actions and the pain of realizing that one's life may need to adjust to a new paradigm in order to live the confession of Christ one professes.

How to sensitively convey this process of change or lack of willingness to change, while protecting participants in a group setting as small and intimate as this one, was perplexing. A report of charts and graphs would be devoid of the intense caring and sharing that took place. In my opinion, an ethnography was the best solution.

The report is written following the six principles of ethnographic writing espoused by James Spradley in his insightful book, The Ethnographic Interview. These principles, which I have tried to follow in order to cull from the data a meaningful and sensitive description, are: universal statements about human beings, their behavior, culture and environment; cross-cultural descriptive statements; general statements about a society or cultural group; general statements about a specific cultural scene; specific statements about a cultural domain; and specific incident statements.[16]

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[16] Spradley, 207-211.

I am prayful that these ethnographic vignettes will be informative, enlightening and point the way for gathered believers to understand and acknowledge our diversity while celebrating our commonality in Christ.

Finally, among the methods of informing used by Patton in Utilization Focused Evaluation are sufi stories, which are tales used to pass on ancient wisdom. Patton provides this reply to skeptics:

> Yogurt is made by adding a small quantity of old yogurt to a larger measure of milk. The action of the bacillus bulgaricus in the seeding portion of yogurt will in time convert the whole into a mass of new yogurt.
>
> One day some friends saw Nasrudin down on his knees beside a pond. He was adding a little yogurt to the water. One of the men said, "what are you trying to do, Nasrudin?"
>
> "I am trying to make yogurt."
>
> "But you can't make yogurt in that way!"
>
> "Yes, I know, but just *supposing* it takes!"
>
> (Shah, 1964:90)[17]

Please see Appendix D.

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[17] Patton, 291.

CHAPTER FIVE

REPORT OF FIELD STUDY

At the inception of this model in ministry project, the group members' diverse viewpoints about Christ, the role of the body of Christ, and divergent understanding of worship as an individual and in community became apparent. From the group's first meeting it was evident that a forum had to be provided to encourage open and honest sharing of different perspectives. A casual give-and-take format was introduced to allow each person to participate without pressure. Consequently, there developed a bond of frankness that allowed the researcher to observe group members' intimate feelings and belief mechanisms. Throughout the project, personal notes and observations were made, and these were used to guide the discussion toward unity in our understanding of certain basic tenets of the Christian faith.

Since the Congregational denomination in general, and the United Church of Christ in particular; attracts members of diverse

beliefs, it was necessary to get everyone on the same page. This was accomplished by using our first two sessions to discuss responses to the question, "Is there anything about religion in general, and Christianity in particular, that you have would like to discuss?" Questions ranged from, "What is the significance of the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ?" to "Are Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses Christians?" Although some of the questions were startling in their lack of basic biblical understanding, all queries were responded to and generally discussed.

As previously mentioned, Community Church had been served by a part-time pastor for a number of years prior to my call, and Bible study had been limited. In order to aid in educating the group to some basic tenets of Christianity, the role of the indwelling Spirit in the renewal of the individual was addressed. The source, purpose, and exercising of the gifts of the Spirit were also studied. In order to keep members of the congregation not attending Bible study abreast of the study group's activities in the project, several sermons were preached on subjects discussed in group sessions. Two of the sermons preached are found in Appendix B.[1]

Next, a survey of the group[2] was taken in order to determine

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[1] The sermons are in the manuscript form used by the researcher in the pulpit, that is, they are written for 'speaking' rather than prose.

[2] For a composite report of survey results see Appendix C.

participants' degree of understanding of the purpose of the church, and its administration. The purpose of this survey was informational only, and was taken to provide the researcher with a sense of where the group stood as a whole. Some private conversations with individuals in need of further enlightenment took place.

The survey indicated the respondents viewed the church as filling a role of spiritual nurturer without necessarily providing leadership and direct involvement in issues relevant to the community. With few exceptions, involvement in the political and sociological concerns of the community were deemed to be unrelated to the mission of the church. Eight out of nine respondents ranked 'politics' last in level of importance in the church. At the same, time some of the same respondents described their model ministry as one "providing outreach into the community" – "developing a relationship with our community" – "providing avenues for change in the community " -- and providing a "leadership role in the community."

The survey results, however, reflected unexpressed fear that politics were divisive and not conducive to accepting diversity within the church. This was contrary to feelings later expressed in group discussions of concern for community issues in which politics were

inherent. Helping the church become relevant to the community's diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural mix was viewed as a key to its successful transition. I often raised the point that concern and commitment to Christ's church without commitment to the concerns and commitments of Christ was often the sign of a contextually irrelevant ministry.

Theological and theoretical discussions of aspects of worship began to take a back seat to the search to understand the difference in the role of the church in community, particularly between Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregations.

In preparation for visits to outside churches a review of church bulletins was undertaken. The historical, traditional, ethnic and cultural significance of each item in the context of corporate worship was discussed. The role of the pastor in the Afro-centric church was compared to his/her counter-part in the Euro-centric church. The place and type of music and its significance was discussed. The interaction of members of congregations was explored. Emotional tone of worship was related to nuances of cultural communication and the need for freedom of expression. What was important to look for and how context related to method of communication was noted.

Participants shared intimate stories of worship experiences in different countries, denominations and racial, ethnic and cultural

settings. As we learned more about the customs of others, a bond began to form that carried into our Sunday service. There was more socializing after service, and people seem reluctant to leave after the sermon. Through this process of preparing to observe others we were able to observe ourselves. Momentum for ministry was building.

In the following pages, several vignettes gleaned from the field notes and observations of the researcher are presented in order to convey a sense of the process experienced during the project.

One is not always able to immediately recognize the result or the long-term effect of a study such as this. Fortunately, there were instances where change, or lack thereof, could be observed. In fact, I continue to see evidence that the seeds sown in discussion group meetings did bear fruit.

D, one of the White participants recently provided me with this example. First, some background, New York City was in the middle of a mayoral campaign. In the recent democratic primary, Ruth Messinger, a White female, ran against Al Sharpton, a Black activist. Neither received a majority. A run-off election was set before the final vote was officially counted. After nine days of campaigning and preparing for a run-off, the Board of Elections informed the public that Messinger had the majority vote after all.

The Board also apologized for taking so long to count the ballots.

When I expressed to D. that I didn't think he would ever accept political involvement of the church, he replied, "Oh, I don't know. Before our meetings, I won't have given Sharpton's loss a second thought. Now, although I don't agree with all he says, I think that if he was White, the votes would have been counted a long time ago."

Diversity in the group

Everyone has certain pre-conceived notions about the world around them, grounded in their emotional and social upbringing. Knowing that we approach life from this shaded perspective is the first step toward opening ourselves up to understanding those who are different from us. This first step requires a certain amount of flexibility.

The majority of the group's participants possessed at least some flexibility in their personalities, which allowed them to maintain open minds as the study progressed. For example, while several people spoke out against church involvement in politics in general, as they became more and more aware of the issues surrounding the school district in Mount Vernon (see Chapter One,

page 10), and became familiar with the significance of the church as a rallying point for social change in the Black community, their attitudes began to change.

Of course, warming to different points of view is not an inate human trait, as we discovered in our group. In actuality, inflexibility was also a part of the group, although on a much smaller scale.

One male participant, a life-long Mount Vernon resident, stands out as the most rigid of the group. Often, as the circumstances surrounding the school district came up in discussion, he spoke emotionally of his childhood memories of the community, and how important tradition was in his life. As a child, for example, he lived across the street from the elementary school. Every day, as the flag was raised, he attended the event, a far from ceremonious affair conducted by a janitor.

In addition to his traditional nature, the gentleman had considerable difficulty letting things go. His nature was to harbor his anger indefinitely. To this day, he boasts, "I refuses to read the local daily newspaper because they once printed an unflattering statement about my father." The incident had taken place at least four decades earlier.

It came as no surprise that this gentleman eventually left the study group when the discussion regarding understanding others,

and working with change intensified.

Unity of thought about Christ

Our early meetings gave expression to a variety of religious thought. Usually biblical reference and discussion clarified or modified misconceptions. That was not always the case. A prime example is A, a South American Catholic who began attending our church, and later joined our group meetings. During one session, the differences between Catholic and Protestant teachings came under review. Someone wanted to know if Catholics were Christian. Another asked, "Why do they pray to Mary and to saints?" I responded with an explanation of the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. He never returned after that discussion. We missed him and his contributions.

Some time later, I ran into A in a large stationary store and he did his best to sidestep me. I did manage to confront him and explain that people can have different points of view and still be successfully striving for the same goal. Unfortunately, the Catholic concept of prayer was so ingrained and necessary to his belief mechanism that he could not face our differences.

Although he never did return to the group, the remaining participants learned a lesson from his actions. We learned that

respecting the beliefs of others doesn't require that we accept their premise. We hold fast to our faith in the hope our example will affect another. B, one participant said, "I know I have a way to go, but I believe more than I did."

A look at ourselves...

In approaching a study of this nature, it is essentially that we look at ourselves, to gain a clearer understanding of our biases and quirks. Our prejudices and pre-conceived notions provide a foundation for our understanding, or lack of understanding of others. Sometimes coming to terms with who we are is a lot more difficult than we think. Occasionally, like in the case of H, it requires a self-induced epiphany.

H, tends to be rather sensitive, an expert at taking things the wrong way. As we prepared for our first field trip to visit another congregation, I left the group in our church parking lot, to retrieve something from the office. When I returned, the group was scattered to the parking lot's four corners and H was no where to be found. The group explained to me that in my absence they had attempted to situate people in different vehicles and H was determined to ride with me. A member of the group remarked that

they were all going to the same place, so she should be willing to ride with anyone. H, in response, left for home.

They stood in the parking lot discussing whether someone should go after her and console her tender feelings, but in the end we left without her. That night H telephoned me, I explained that she needed to be more tolerant, and that she should attempt to see things from other people's perspectives or she would always be on the outside, hurt and alone. I told her, while I had gone beyond reasonable, as had others, to smooth her ruffled feathers, it was growing tiresome. Since that time, H, has interacted differently, visibly trying to curb what had developed into a habit. It was remarked that, "H, was God's gift to our group to test our patience." Everyone seemed to have passed the text.

A look at others

When we think of 'others' we tend to imagine people who are totally different from us. In reality, 'others' may simply be those who are not us. The group learned this lesson by visiting church A and church B. In both cases, members of the group anticipated great differences between the two congregations and themselves. What they found was that much of what took place in the churches matched our worship services. Certain details and attitudes differed

from one congregation to another, but the basic services held a remarkable familiarity for the group. Members of our group anticipated differences with statements such as: "I like to listen to preaching, but I don't want to be shouted at," -- "I hope the music's not too loud." Their apprehension turned out to be based on pre-conceived notions. Most participant's comments were similar to R, who said, "I don't think there's much of a difference in our services, some things were done differently, still, I think we worship pretty much the same. We have a little of each of the services in ours."

Church A

Church A is located in a settled African-American community, and is an anchor of the community, The Pastor holds two services each to accommodate the large and active Black congregation in the small sanctuary.

Our visit to Church A held the most trepidation for the group, which, as previously stated, was primarily African-American. In actuality, the group was quickly and warmly incorporated into the Congregational fold. We were welcomed several times from the pulpit and asked repeatedly to partake of the after-service snack, which was cheerfully offered in the fellowship room of the church. Not only were the congregation members warm and friendly, but the

church itself possessed a coziness - the product of an A-framed architectural style and a standing-room-only crowd. Our group was fill of enthusiastic praise for their hospitality. Group participants noted: "We were invited to have refreshments with them. . . invited over and over." "They introduced each other and fussed over us." And many shared the sentiment of a participant: "The service was long. . . but a lot of people were encouraged and honored, and that's good to do."

Church B

In contrast to Church A, was our visit to Church B, a wealthy, predominately White congregation settled in a century-old church. The settled rigidity of the congregation can be traced back to 1896. A wealthy gentleman who built, and controlled the town was asked to contribute to the building fund of a new church; instead, he build it himself, in the process establishing a set of rules (both spoken and implied) that governs the community to this day.

Change is something that is rarely is well-received by this community as a whole. For example, when a large private school facility closed its campus and an ethnic organization proposed purchasing the property, the residents successfully fought to keep

the group out. They opted to leave an empty property in their midst rather than witness an ethnic and social change in their community.

Church B seemed to exhibit some of that same commitment to community and tradition. The extent to which church members will go to preserve the past is depicted in an incident that took place during our visit. While the church service was underway, an elderly woman in the front of the church had a fainting spell caused by the intense summer heat in the well-maintained old building. When questioned about the lack of air conditioning, fans or even windows that could be opened, the pastor explained that the congregation had turned down every proposal designed to increase air circulation in the building. They would rather be uncomfortable, than stray from tradition.

Church B's hesitancy to embrace diversity came through loud and clear to the study group in more than just the example noted above. Following the service, coffee and pastry was served on the church lawn, nicely arranged, and on a silver platter. The presentation was far more formal and cold than the food offered during our visit to Church A. While it was announced that coffee and pastry would be available on the lawn, there was no personal invitation, no pleasant conversation, no welcoming handshakes.

Instead, Church B's congregation distanced itself from our group. The pastor of Church B, allowed in an aside to me, while greeting his parishioners, "My folks should be mixing more."

The outcome of the experience was that the study group discovered what it felt like to be considered outsider, and learned that where you think you will find gaping differences (in the Black, Church A congregation) and where you do find them among (the White, Church B church members) can come as a surprise.

Preaching

The Church B experience also provided the group with a deeper understanding of preaching, and the need to recognize and acknowledge the community context of a church's congregation.

During the sermon at Church B, the pastor stated that he was changing a word in the text of 1 Corintians 6:7, from 'weapons' to 'instruments.' When we returned from our visit, a members of our group stated, "he changed the text. . . why was the word changed?" I explained that in preaching, a preacher interprets scripture through what is referred to as her/his hermeneutics, that is, one's context of life, or point of view. I explained that one's hermeneutic is the basis from which a text can be made meaningful and relevant to the community to which it is preached.

I continued, "When someone is in a position of control, they do not need 'weapons' to fight battles, they need 'instruments' to fine tune that control. In Church B, the congregation needs instruments; in Church A, they need weapons."

A lively discussion ensued. When asked what our church, which was in transition, required, the group unanimously replied, "We need to be a 'weapons' church." Prior to this experience, the significance of this word change would have gone unnoticed.

Music

Feeling ill-equipped to function in unfamiliar territory was something the group experienced during the musical portions of the Church A service. While both churches incorporated music into their services, only at Church A did the group feel like outsiders. As warm and welcoming as the congregation was in other areas, some of their hymns were unfamiliar to our group, and, while unintentional, nothing was done to help the group take part in the singing. "The songs they sang were unfamiliar, and there was no page number or insert in the bulletin to follow the words," stated one participant.

The experience demonstrated how taking things for granted with one's own service or can be disconcerting to new-comers or

those unfamiliar with your tradition. In each service, the music was in the context of the given church; the music was reflective of that congregations emotional tone.

Toward unity of the body of Christ...

One participant acknowledged in the initial survey feeling that the purpose of the church was as follows: "To bridge gaps which separate people by teaching and practicing the principles for which Christ stood with the result that prejudices and hatred can be curtailed. In effect to strengthen each of us spiritually and make us true Christians and children of God." The following and final vignette opens that possibility.

The framing of this incident grows out of a discussion that arose at one of the group sessions. It involved why African-American students in the Mount Vernon School System wanted to participate in activities reflective of Black culture as opposed to what 'everyone' else did. You recall from Chapter 1 that the student population in the Mount Vernon School System is primarily Black, while the administration and teaching staff is predominately White. The school situation is a bone of contention of long standing, and for years has polarized the community along racial lines. It was a

frequent visitor at our group meetings because the school board election campaign was underway.

My objective in this vignette is to demonstrate that not understanding the underlying reasons why racial, ethnic and cultural groups have different approaches to various aspects of community leads to misunderstanding and latent resentment. I feel that becoming aware of the reasons and acknowledging their right to exist, will provide the opportunity to change attitudes and , in fact, cause diverse ethnic groups to find commonality.

Almost every Christian will profess liberal leanings regarding African-American holidays and other observances. Many entirely Euro-centric congregations observe the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. with a sermon on improving race relations, and the contributions of African-Americans are marched out and applauded during Black History Month. During these occasions diverse groups join together and sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the so-called "Negro National Anthem," along with other songs of struggle, such as "We Shall Overcome."

These songs, especially "Lift Every Voice and Sing," speak of a people who found unity in Christian principles despite evidence of contrary practice, and yet in the end sing, "lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee, lest our hearts, drunk with

wine of the world, we forget thee; shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand, true to our God, true to our native land."

In an aside, the following statement was made to me after one of our group discussion included school system issues:
"I often wondered why African-American's need their own national anthem; it seems divisive." A teaching moment came during the celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. s birthday.

The air was crisp and cold on Sunday morning as I opened the church doors and prepared for morning services, and a chill of apprehension coursed through my body. I was about to do something I had never done before, read a chapter from a book as a Sunday morning sermon. As the service hour approached, I realized that if I could convey those feelings of empathy and understanding to the congregation, it would be a giant step forward.

When I was reading Strength of Love, by Martin Luther King, Jr. I was deeply effected by the chapter entitled, "Loving your enemies." So graphic to me was its Christian application that I wept at the lose of this great soul, whose application of God's greatest commandment changed the attitudes of so many across the world.

The service opened with "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and every eye remained glued to the inserted page. The congregation was hesitant, this was not a familiar hymn in this gathering. Than

we sang "Amazing Grace," again an inserted copy. Concealing my nervousness, I began reading "Loving Your Enemies."

> In spite of these insistent questions and persistent objections, this command of Jesus challenges us with new urgency. Upheaval after upheaval has reminded us that modern man is traveling along a road called hate, in a journey that will bring us to destruction and damnation. Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, the command to love one's enemy is an absolute necessity for our survival. . .[3]

The air was filled with echo-like silence. The congregation was absorbed in the reading. Following the service, members of the congregation expressed appreciation for Dr. King's explanation of what it means to love one another.

As she left church, K pulled me aside and said, "I will never sing or hear, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" without feeling the depth of it's meaning. The service was a great experience. I never heard anything Martin Luther King wrote, But I will be looking for more. That's what we need in our community. Thank you."[4]

---

[3] King, Martin Luther, Jr., Strength to Love (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 54.

[4] Quotes and comments in this chapter are gleaned from reflective notes and observations of the participant researcher.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS

Summary

The aim of this model in ministry project was to foster among its participants understanding and acknowledgment of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in order to provide a community worship environment that is open to multiracial, multicultural participation.

The importance of this study is that its application can quickly aid in fostering understanding of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in churches experiencing stagnation in transition by encouraging dialogue that raises the potential for acceptance. During the implementation of this project it was found that dialogue led to understanding, and a willingness not just to hear, but to listen to a different point of view.

As this tuning-in occurred, the participants found that sharing experiences from diverse perspectives was uplifting and

encouraging. Such sharing became the basis for recognizing how edification functions in the body of Christ.

Although there is a sound biblical basis for the utilization of edification, literature on the specific subject of methodologies of edification as a means of spiritual and physical growth of the body of Christ was sparse. However, the work of David Peterson was instrumental in implementing the theoretical and theological positions assumed in this paper.

The theological foundation of this project is primarily the apostle Paul's teaching on the gifts of the spirit, and their use in the edification of the body of Christ. The underlying premise of this model in ministry project is the individuality of worship in its practice and praxis, and the use of methodologies of edification to utilize the gifts of the Spirit among gathered believers.

Understanding that worship, for the Christian, is an individual act, sometimes taking place in community, opens the door to the practice of Christianity as all-inclusive, without reference to or requirement of racial, ethnic, sociological or cultural constraint. A further premise is that God distributes the gifts of the Spirit in response to the specific needs of each gathered group of believers. Therefore, God's distribution of the gifts of the Spirit, and the

exercising of those gifts, are God's means of effecting unity within the body of Christ.

Often the flocking sounds of denomination and the rigidity of rhetoric stand in the path of our churches becoming avenues of welcome over bridges of acceptance. The context city of this project is not different. Lack of dialogue within the wider church community has encouraged retreat into comfortable corners of complacency, resulting in some churches becoming pillars of polarization upholding bastions of bigotry.

The eclectic city of Mount Vernon, New York, has a long history of uncomfortable transitional experiences. The geography, politics, and ethnicity of the city foster and embrace polarization. Although the city is 70 percent people of color, an annual battle for control of the school board and its 100 million dollar budget divides the city racially.

Community Church is strategically situated to serve a diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural population with understanding of diversity while offering celebration of our commonality in Christ. The context church, during its formative years, was relevant and sensitive to the needs of the community. Over the years, the lack of a defined transitional dialogue led to the erosion of membership and its attendant consequences.

I see my call to the context church as God having assigned me the task of developing a multiracial, multicultural worship environment that reflects the surrounding community. I feel uniquely suited to this task, considering my multiracial background, and unique experience living as both "White' man and 'Black' man in separate context. This model in ministry project has focused my life experience toward fostering racial, ethnic, and cultural understanding within the body of Christ. The field study aspect of this project provided a unique opportunity to apply and share my considerable world travel and observation of other cultures one-on-one.

A qualitative research paradigm using ethnographic methods was chosen to gather, assess and present the data gleaned from the field study. This methodology was chosen because of its flexibility in data collection, recognition of researcher bias, and encouragement of researcher participation. Additionally, in the ethnographic method, anonymity can be assured. Ethical considerations are important in this type of study because sharing intimate feelings about racial, ethnic and cultural diversity can free the spirit, but can also damage the reputation.

The project participants visited two outside congregations to observe and participate in their worship services. There were

nineteen participants including the researcher, who was a participant observer and the sole collector of data.

An informational survey was taken to determine the level of knowledge and acceptance of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural understanding present in the group, as well as to form some basis for focus of the group meetings. Bible study/group discussion meetings were held along with de-briefing sessions following each of the visits to outside congregations. In the ethnographic form , the report of findings conveys the change or lack of change that occurred.

Conclusions

The most consistent element in the process of this model in ministry project has been change. The initial study was to look into the effect of change in worship style between an Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregation in a church in transition. From the start, confusion surfaced regarding the misuse of the word 'worship.'

Research into the biblical model of what occurred among gathered believers in the early Christian church revealed that something other than worship took place in those formative days. In fact, the apostle Paul, in his voluminous writings, did not mention

'worship' in its present day context at all. Clearly, he had something else in mind -- the edifying of the body of Christ.

The direction and focus of the study was turned from what was different in the 'worship service' between Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregations to how they differed in the edification of gathered believers.

In Bible study, the group had exposure to the teachings of Paul regarding the indwelling of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and their use for the edification of the body of Christ. That foundation led to an understanding of 'worship' as an individual act of yielding in ardent contemplation of God through the Christ event, and the further conclusion that although such worship may take place in community, it is nonetheless an individual act. Although believers gather for corporate worship, they primarily gather, or ought to gather, for the building up of the body of Christ through fellowship, and the sharing of the gifts of the spirit that God has bestowed among them.

What was of concern in this church in transition was not 'worship style,' but rather, differences in methodologies of edification, that is, essentially, how diverse ethnic, racial and cultural groups communicate within the congregation.

At first, I thought this view of worship as individual -- and the utilization of the gifts of the Spirit in the edification of the body -- was drawing a fine point. But as I began to think of the churches that are experiencing physical and spiritual growth, I found it much easier to discern 'worship' from 'edification.' I returned to study Paul's teaching and confirmed the potential for spiritual and physical growth in the body of Christ using Paul's principles for exercising the gifts of the Spirit for the edification of believers.

Reflection

Through this project, the congregation came to recognize that the ministry at Community Church is, in fact, their ministry, and as the apostle Paul states in 2 Corinthians 4:1: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not. . . " In other words, all believers have a part in the vision, mission and ministry God has for a particular church. Looking to the pastor as the church's be-all, do-all and end-all is contrary to full utilization of the exercising of gifts of the Spirit in the body of Christ.

Focusing on a one-person ministry is, in my opinion, short-sighted and limiting, particularly in a small congregation.

Some pastors express concern that a shared ministry curtails leadership in style and effectiveness, and leads to an erosion of the

Bible-based role of the pastor as shepherd of the flock, with all of its attendant responsibilities and benefits. I disagree, and believe such fear to be unfounded.

God does not create competing ministries in the same body of believers. We need to have enough trust in God's judgment to know that God makes each person's ministry uniquely meaningful and relevant to the congregation to which he/she is called. Additionally, ministry shared with the congregation allows each gathered group of believers the opportunity to exercise their gift(s).

Each believer is given a gift(s) of the Spirit, states Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:7, and if we can get believers to use their gift(s) of the Spirit for the edification of the church, much more ministry will take place, thereby building up the body of Christ both physically and spiritually. ". . .the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians. 4:16)

One of the keys to the success of the project was the Bible study of Paul's teaching of the indwelling Spirit in Ephesians 3:22 ("In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."), his comparison of the body of Christ to the human body in 1 Corinthians 12:12ff ("For as the body is one, and

hath many members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."), and his explanation of the purpose of the gift(s) of the Spirit in Ephesians 4: 12-16

> (Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.)

The progression of these lessons from Paul led to the understanding of the importance each believer and the exercising of their gift(s) has in edifying the church. When the individual nature of worship is understood, one more clearly sees the purpose of the gathering of believers for the edification of the body of Christ. One also comes to understand that edification takes place wherever and whenever believers gather. As our Lord has stated in Matthew 18:20: ". . .where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Having this foundation laid was important because the value and advantage of diverse gifts of the Spirit and diversity of human experience in the edification of the body of Christ became apparent. Additionally, church attendance improved, the need to gather as believers was reinforced because of the understanding that one

comes to Christ and Christianity individually, but the practice of Christianity can occur only in community.

At the start, there was concern over the prospect of seeking interaction with those of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural background. Such concern and fears are usually based on pre-conceived notions and a lack of knowledge. But through personal and intellectual exposure to diversity, participants came away with an understanding that differences are not necessarily bad or frightening things. Actually, while differences may be obvious on the surface, underneath, those we view as "others' suffer the same concerns, value the same experiences and strive for many of the same desires and goals as we do. Through our diversity, the group discovered, runs a common thread of human nature in all its frailties, strengths and potential for abundant life.

The study group members came away from this project motivated toward change. By the end of the project they had created a list of thirty-one things the congregation could do to demonstrate that Community Church is comprised of believers seeking to acknowledge and understand the diversity among us while celebrating our commonality in Christ.

For example, the list included:

1. Develop theme for the church –DIVERSITY AND UNITY
2. Change the name of the church to reflect openness
3. Display flags of different countries
4. Join service with Korean and Brazilian congregations
5. Hold Ethnic theme celebrations

A final word

If given the opportunity to recreate the study, there are some things I would do differently, in order to broaden the accomplishments of the project.

I would seek a more racially and ethnically diverse group of participants, to broaden the participants' cultural exposure. Second, I would use more secular-based material, such as videos of the civil rights movement, concentration camps and human rights violations. It was surprising to me to discover that today's incidents of religious persecution were unknown to some members of the group. As a counterbalance, I would have participants share special ethnic celebrations and experience various cultural groups in a positive light. In short, the key to understanding is to provide as much information as possible on cultural, racial, and ethnic differences.

Can this model be replicated? Most definitely. However,

there are several caveats to keep in mind. First, the pastor or leader must be knowledgeable, caring and respectful of cultural mores. Second, flexibility is required along with patience. Often it took several sessions, and substantial interaction in group meetings and in private, to find a way to move toward understanding. Positive lessons did eventually occur in every case, often within the group and through the participants themselves.

In all, the study group, and in the future hopefully the congregation and community, will benefit from this study through the gathering of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural believers who acknowledge diversity while celebrating commonality in Christ.

This project was about the effect of differences in edification between Afro-centric and Euro-centric congregations on congregations in transition. In reality what we all learned is that there are some differences between the groups in 'worship service' and methodologies of edification. However, the most effective thing a church in transition can do, is to prepare itself to exercise the gifts of the Spirit among those God directs to our doors. Only then can the church truly serve its congregation, and the congregation truly serve the church.

GLOSSARY

Body of Christ: Paul's concept of the church as found in Romans 12:5 - "we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." A gathered or assembled group of believers in Jesus Christ.
The fundamental idea expounded by Paul that there is one body, the body of Christ, and this body of Christ is the church.

Church in transition: A church whose majority membership is experiencing membership decline due to changes in the racial, ethnic or cultural make-up of its neighborhood is a church in transition. The nature of such a church's approach to implementation of plans for its future can be a strong indication of its potential for survival. There are basically two ways to go, one positive, the other negative. Those two ways are – assimilation or polarization.

Edification: The strengthening, building up and encouraging of one another in the context of the body of Christ. The building up of the body of Christ through fellowship, and the sharing and exercising the gifts of the Spirit that God has bestowed among a particular gathered group of believers.

Emotional tone: The spiritual atmosphere and interaction created by a gathered group of believers. The collective expression of individual worshippers in the context of 'worship' in community. Emotional tone may be reflected by, but not limited to such areas as 'call and response,' shout, dance, use of music, stoicism, silence, or any other modality of worship that is traditional to a particular racial, ethnic or cultural group.

Methodology of edification: The various methodologies (preaching, teaching, music, emotional tone, etc.) of accomplishing the strengthening, building up and encouragement of believers.

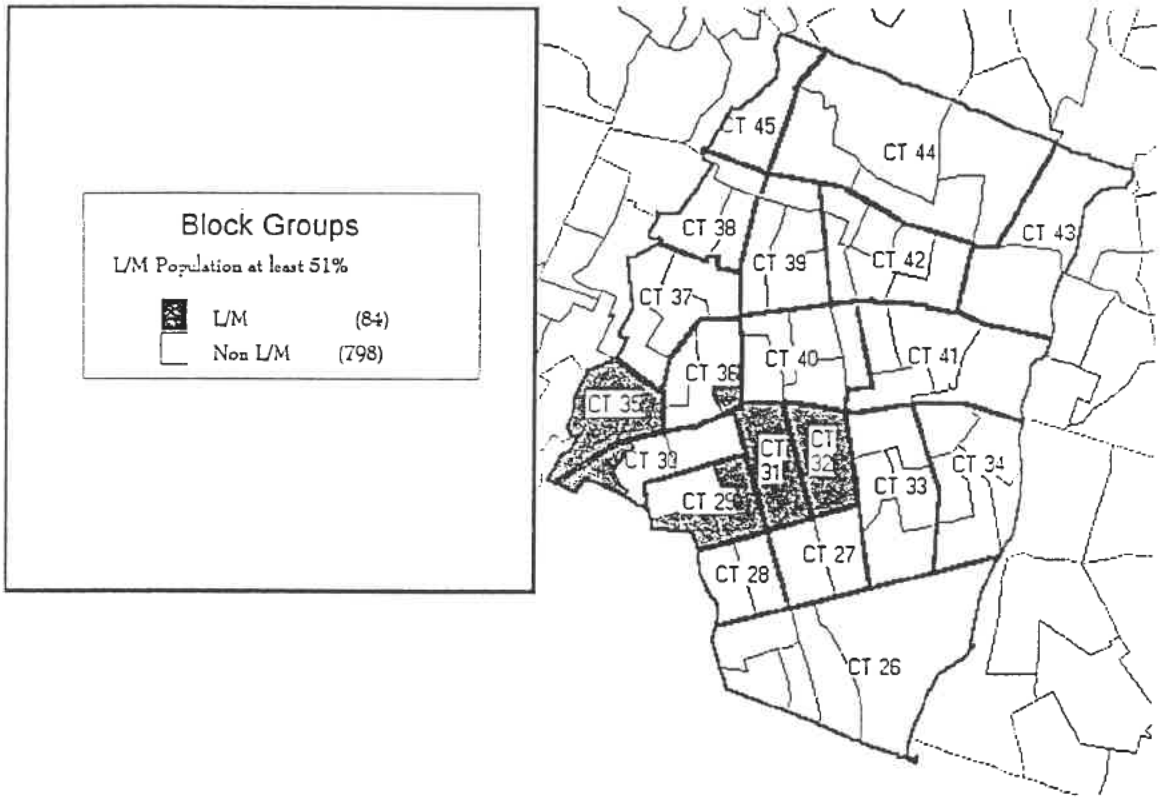
Worship: The individual act of yielding in ardent contemplation of God through the Christ event. While such worship may take place in community, it is nonetheless an individual act. For example: In the instance of the use of music in worship (one of the methodologies of edification of the body of Christ), the music is not the worship; what is taking place between the individual and God within the individual's 'temple' is the actual worship. Christians should worship God in every aspect of living by their individual emulation of the life of God's only begotten son, Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A

MOUNT VERNON STATISTICS

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

MAP # 1 - LOW/MODERATE INCOME AREA



Source:

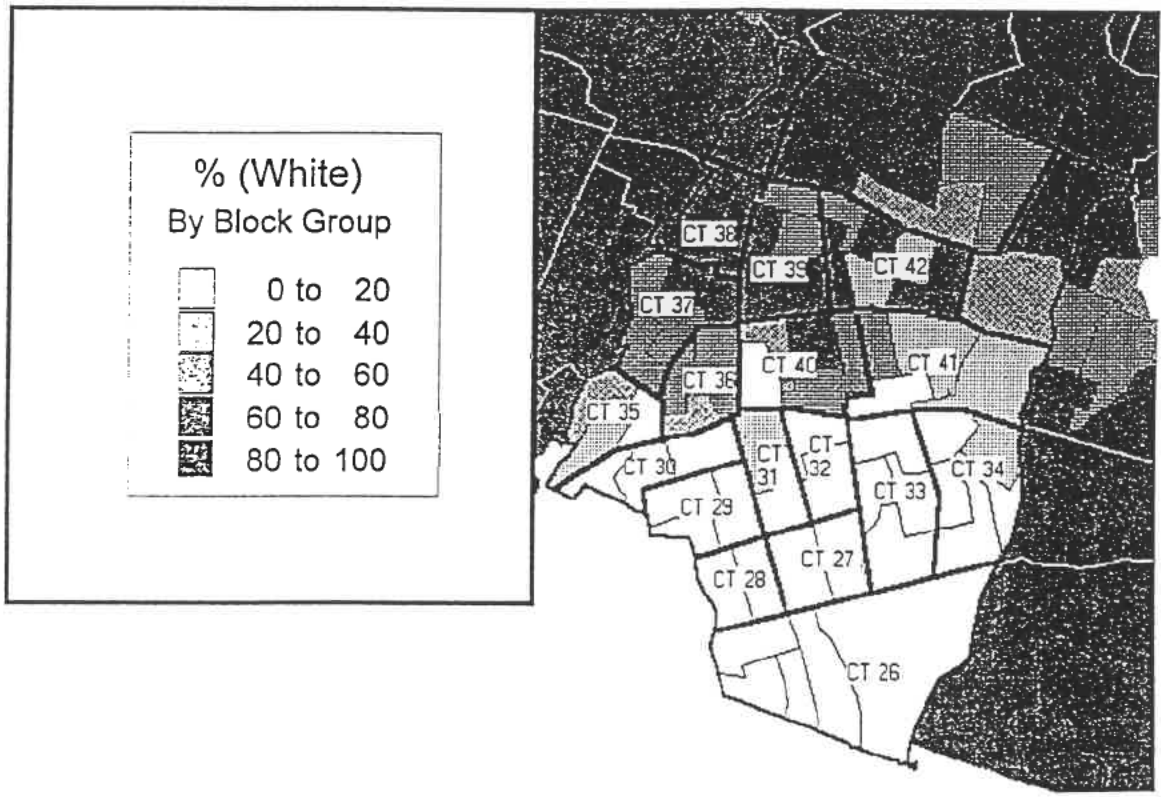
City of Mount Vernon, New York
1997 Action Plan Draft

Public information distributed through

Mount Vernon Public Library

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

MAP # 2 - WHITE POPULATION AREA



Source:

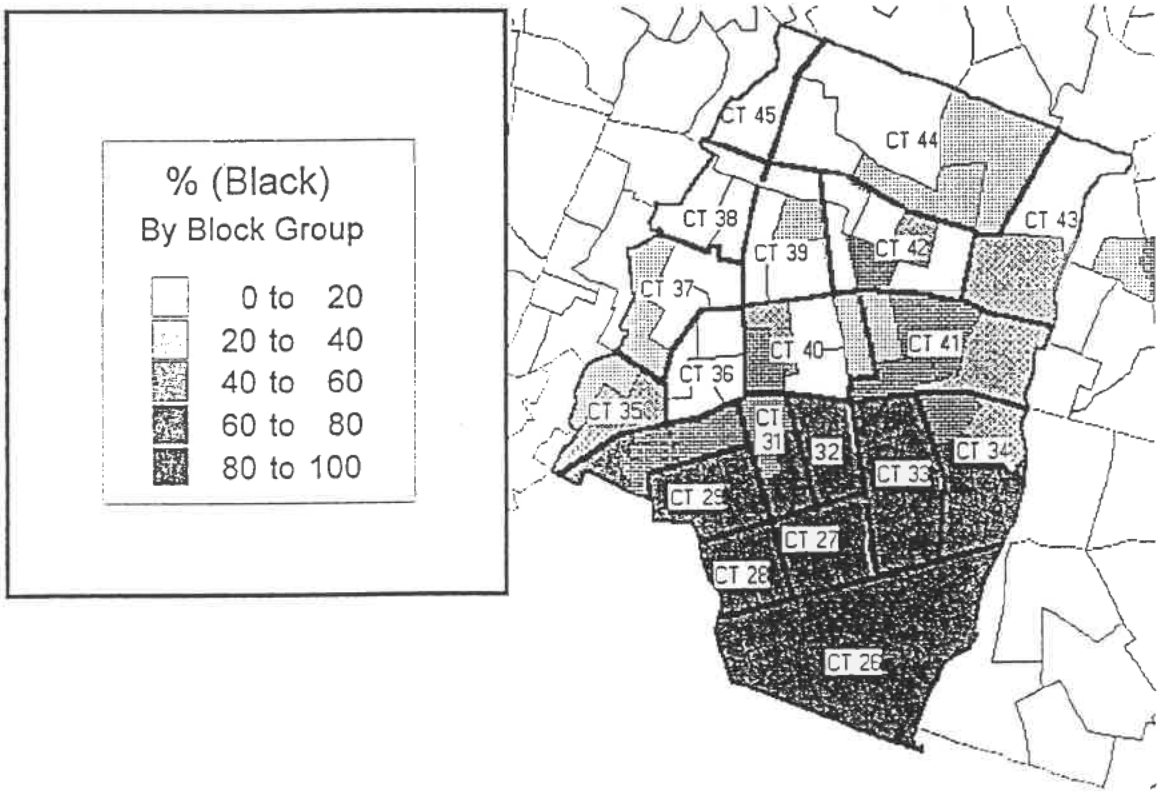
City of Mount Vernon, New York
1997 Action Plan Draft

Public information distributed through

Mount Vernon Public Library

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

MAP # 3 - BLACK POPULATION AREA



Source:

City of Mount Vernon, New York
1997 Action Plan Draft

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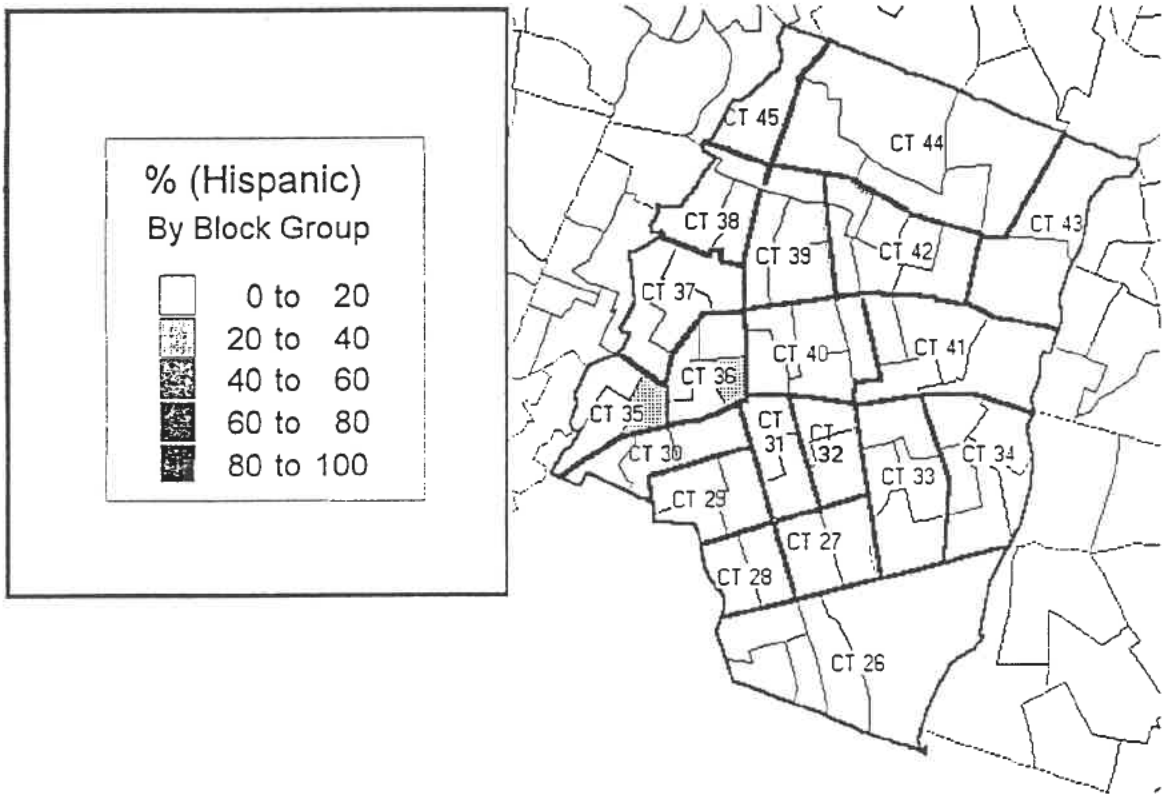
Mount Vernon Public Library

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

MAP # 4 - HISPANIC POPULATION AREA



Source:

City of Mount Vernon, New York
1997 Action Plan Draft

Public information distributed through

Mount Vernon Public Library

1990 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING -- SUMMARY TAPE FILE 1 -- SUMMARY CHARACTERISTICS
PREPARED BY THE NEW YORK STATE DATA CENTER, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT -- FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL (518) 474-6005
REA NAME: WESTCHESTER COUNTY COUNTY: 119 MCD: PLACE: TRACT/BNA: BG/BLOCK:

P1/4 PERSONS BY URBAN/RURAL RESIDENCE

TOTAL	874866
URBANIZED AREA	0
OTHER URBAN	0
RURAL	0
NOT SPECIFIED	874866

P2 FAMILIES	227827
P3 HOUSEHOLDS	320030

P7 RACE

WHITE	694308
BLACK	120195
AMER. INDIAN	1357
ESKIMO	18
ALEUT	30
CHINESE	5904
FILIPINO	2820
JAPANESE	9264
ASIAN INDIAN	8058
KOREAN	3572
VIETNAMESE	335
CAMBODIAN	53
HMONG	0
LAOTION	88
THAI	567
OTHER ASIAN	1355
HAWAIIN	67
SAMOAN	15
TONGAN	0
OTHER POLYNESIAN	3
GUAMANIAN	52
OTHER MICRONESIAN	1
MELANESIAN	7
OTHER PACIFIC ISL	8
OTHER RACE	26789

P9 HISPANIC ORIGIN

MEXICAN	9273
PUERTO RICAN	27094
CUBAN	5075
OTHER HISPANIC	44752

P8/10 HISPANIC ORIGIN BY RACE

	NONHISPANIC	HISPANIC
WHITE	640558	53750
BLACK	114265	5930
NATIVE AMERICAN	1029	376
ASIAN/PAC ISL	31611	558
OTHER RACE	1209	25580
TOTAL	788672	86194

P5/11/12 PERSONS BY AGE AND SEX

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
UNDER 1	10002	5207	4795
1 AND 2	25326	12903	12423
3 AND 4	22390	11431	10959
5	10738	5519	5219
6	10344	5333	5011
7 TO 9	30315	15433	14882
10 TO 14	50188	25907	24281
15 TO 17	30966	16085	14881
18 AND 19	22194	11050	11144
20	12395	6036	6359
21	11940	5806	6134
22 TO 24	37458	18384	19074
25 TO 29	71471	35329	36142
30 TO 34	74788	36520	38268
35 TO 39	69586	33659	35927
40 TO 44	66205	31437	34768
45 TO 49	55665	26055	29610
50 TO 54	47119	21995	25124
55 TO 59	44805	21192	23613
60 AND 61	18542	8694	9848
62 TO 64	26403	12300	14103
65 TO 69	39437	17629	21808
70 TO 74	30416	12481	17935
75 TO 79	24909	9435	15474
80 TO 84	17070	5693	11377
85+	14194	3767	10427
TOTAL	874866	415280	459586

P16 HOUSEHOLD TYPE

	NO RELATED CHILDREN	W/ RELATED CHILDREN
FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS		
MARRIED COUPLE	80757	99448
MALE HOUSEHOLDER, NO WIFE PRESENT	3576	6913
FEMALE HOUSEHOLDER, NO HUSBAND PRESENT	19341	17792
NON FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS		
MALE HOUSEHOLDER	35333	
FEMALE HOUSEHOLDER	56870	

P17A PERSONS PER FAMILY	3.16

H17A/18A PERSONS PER UNIT

ALL OCCUPIED UNITS	2.64
OWNER OCCUPIED UNITS	2.85
RENTER OCCUPIED UNITS	2.36

H23/A/B/C VALUE OF SPECIFIED OWNER-OCCUPIED UNITS

LESS THAN $15,000	130
$15,000 TO 19,999	70
$20,000 TO 24,999	83
$25,000 TO 29,999	85
$30,000 TO 34,999	72
$35,000 TO 39,999	75
$40,000 TO 44,999	97
$45,000 TO 49,999	77
$50,000 TO 59,999	255
$60,000 TO 74,999	529
$75,000 TO 99,999	1863
$100,000 TO 124,999	2869
$125,000 TO 149,999	3516
$150,000 TO 174,999	7225
$175,000 TO 199,999	10792
$200,000 TO 249,999	23910
$250,000 TO 299,999	21457
$300,000 TO 399,999	26626
$400,000 TO 499,999	13004
$500,000 OR MORE	19283
LOWER QUARTILE	$211,000
MEDIAN	$283,500
UPPER QUARTILE	$397,300

H32/A/B/C CONTRACT RENT -- SPECIFIED RENTER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS

LESS THAN $100	1415
$100 TO 149	3691
$150 TO 199	3193
$200 TO 249	3578
$250 TO 299	4462
$300 TO 349	7052
$350 TO 399	8595
$400 TO 449	10489
$450 TO 499	9437
$500 TO 549	11857
$550 TO 599	8212
$600 TO 649	9397
$650 TO 699	7066
$700 TO 749	7179
$750 TO 999	16900
$1,000 OR MORE	11678
NO CASH RENT	3923
LOWER QUARTILE	$395
MEDIAN	$543
UPPER QUARTILE	$733

H1/3/5 TENURE AND VACANCY STATUS

OWNER OCCUPIED	190933
RENTER OCCUPIED	129092
VACANT:	
FOR RENT	5176
FOR SALE ONLY	5006
RENTED OR SOLD, NOT OCCUPIED	1850
OCCASIONAL USE	2428
FOR MIGRANT WORKERS	21
OTHER VACANT	2216
TOTAL	336727

H41 UNITS IN STRUCTURE

1, DETACHED	147014
1, ATTACHED	14244
2	30480
3 OR 4	29901
5 TO 9	18389
10 TO 19	16819
20 TO 49	25844
50 OR MORE	48757
MOBILE HOME OR TRAILER	192
OTHER	5087

P28 GROUP QUARTERS POPULATION

INSTITUTIONAL:	
CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS	5503
NURSING HOMES	7256
PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS	517
JUVENILE INSTITUTIONS	1604
OTHER INSTITUTIONS	1142
OTHER GROUP QUARTERS:	
COLLEGE DORMITORIES	6889
MILITARY QUARTERS	0
EMERGENCY SHELTERS FOR HOMELESS	1916
VISIBLE IN STREET LOCATIONS	14
OTHER NONINSTITUTIONAL	4255
TOTAL	29096

APPENDIX B

TWO SERMONS

"THE MEASURE OF GOD'S LOVE" EPHESIANS 3: 14 -19

THERE IS A PURPOSE AND A PLAN GROWING OUT OF THE
APOSTLE PAUL'S PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS...
AND GOD HAS A PURPOSE AND PLAN FOR US...
INDIVIDUALLY AND AS HIS GATHERED CHURCH...

IN OUR BIBLE STUDY WE HAVE BEGUN TO EXPLORE PRAYER
AS THE MEDIUM GOD USES TO DRAW US CLOSER TO HIM...
AND TO FED OUR INDWELLING SPIRIT OF CHRIST...
THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE POWER OF HIS LOVE...

YOU RECALL OUR UNDERSTANDING THUS FAR...
THE ESSENCE OF PAUL'S PRAYER...
FAITH OPENS THE DOOR TO THE HOLY SPIRIT...
THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALS CHRIST TO US... THEN...
AS BELIEVERS... CHRIST FILLS THE HEART...

THE HEART BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND THE LOVE OF GOD...
AND LOVE IS THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH WE BECOME
INFILLED WITH GOD... FOR GOD IS LOVE...

TODAY WE WANT TO LOOK AT THE LAST FEW VERSES...
OF PAUL'S PRAYER... IN EPHESIANS 3...
IN ORDER TO EXPLORE THE... "MEASURE OF GOD'S LOVE"
**** LET US PRAY ***

THE LOVE OF CHRIST WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE...
IS IMMEASURABLE ... BOUNDLESS... WITHOUT LIMITS...

SINCE THERE IS NO MEASURE... PAUL GATHERED...
ALL OF THESE MEASURING DEVICES TOGETHER...
TO EXPRESS ONE THOUGHT...
THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST'S LOVE...

DEPTH AND HEIGHT ARE THE SAME DIMENSION...
MEASURED FROM OPPOSITE ENDS...
ONE BEGINS AT THE TOP AND GOES DOWN...
THE OTHER BEGINS AT THE BOTTOM AND GOES UP...

THE SURFACE IS THE SAME IN EITHER CASE...
SO WE HAVE THREE DIMENSIONS OF A SOLID HERE...
BREADTH... LENGTH... AND DEPTH...

I WANT TO USE THESE THREE DIMENSIONS...
TO SEE IN EACH OF THEM A SEPARATE... AND BLESSED
ASPECT OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD...

FIRST ... WHAT IS THE BREADTH OF THAT LOVE?

HUMANKIND HAS MANY COMMON CHARACTERISTICS...
WE ALL SUFFER... WE ALL SIN...
WE ALL HUNGER...
WE ALL ASPIRE... WE ALL HOPE AND DIE...

AND WE ALL OCCUPY PRECISELY THE SAME RELATION...
TO GOD'S LOVE WHICH LIES IN JESUS CHRIST...
THERE ARE NO STEP CHILDREN IN GOD'S DIVERSE FAMILY...
NONE OF THEM RECEIVE A MORE... NONE LESS...
OF HIS LOVE AND GOODNESS THAN ANY OTHER...

GOD DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THE DIVISIONS... THE LIMITS...
THE SEPARATION BY COLOR... CLASS OR CULTURE...
SOCIETY PLACES ON HUMANITY...

THE BREADTH OF CHRIST'S LOVE IS THE BREADTH OF
HUMANITY... AND THIS LOVE OF GOD... BROAD AS HUMANITY
IS NOT SHALLOW BECAUSE IT IS BROAD...

OUR LOVE IS OFTEN LIKE A POWERFUL STREAM WHICH RUNS
DEEP AND SWIFT... WHEN HELD WITHIN NARROW BANKS...
NARROW LIMITS... BUT AS SOON AS IT WIDENS IT BECOMES
SLOW AND POWERLESS AND SHALLOW...

THE INTENSITY OF HUMAN AFFECTION VARIES INVERSELY AS
ITS EXTENDS... IT LESSENS THE MORE IT INCLUDES...
THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS DEEP ENOUGH... WIDE ENOUGH TO
INCLUDE ALL... YET NOT LOSE ITS POWER... ITS STRENGTH...

IN FACT... THIS BROAD LOVE IS UNIVERSAL...
BECAUSE IT IS INDIVIDUAL...
EVERY PERSON HAS A SPACE IN THEIR HEART... TO SAY...
IN FAITH "HE LOVE ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME..."

THE BREADTH OF HIS LOVE IS WORLD WIDE... YET
CONDENSED INTO A SLIVER OF LIGHT WHICH CAN FIND ITS
WAY THROUGH A TINY OPENING IN OF A SINGLE SOUL...

THERE ARE TWO WAYS OF EXPRESSING THE LOVE OF CHRIST
BOTH OF THEM VALID... WE COULD SAY...
HE LOVES ALL THEREFORE HE LOVES ME... AND WE CAN SAY
"HE LOVES ME... THEREFORE... HE LOVES ALL...

FOR SURELY THE LOVE THAT HAS STOOPED TO ME...
CAN NEVER PASS BY ANY HUMAN SOUL...
WHAT IS THE BREADTH OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST...
IT IS AS BROAD AS HUMANITY...
IT IS AS NARROW AS MYSELF...

SECOND... WHAT IS THE LENGTH OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST?

ONE WAY TO GAUGE THE LENGTH OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST
IS FOUND IN THE SCRIPTURAL QUESTION...
"...HOW OFTEN SHALL MY BROTHER SIN AGAINST ME AND I
FORGIVE HIM? AND IN JESUS ANSWER...

"I SAY NOT UNTO THEE UNTIL SEVEN TIMES...
BUT UNTIL SEVENTY TIME SEVEN..."
CHRIST SEEMS TO BE EXPRESSING HERE...
THE IDEA OF BOUNDLESS... UNLIMITED FORGIVENESS...

AND THE LAW THAT CHRIST LAID DOWN FOR HIS SERVANT...
IS THE LAW HE APPLIES TO HIMSELF...
WHAT IS THE LENGTH OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST?
HERE IS ONE MEASURE OF IT...

HOWEVER LONG DRAWN OUT MY SIN MAY...
HIS LOVE IS LONGER...
THE LINE OF HIS LOVE RUNS OUT INTO INFINITY... FAR
BEYOND THE POINT WHERE THE LINE OF MY SIN STOPS...

ANY THING SHORT OF ETERNAL PATIENCE WITH MAN...
WOULD HAVE LONG AGO BEEN EXHAUSTED BY MAN'S SINS...
THE PITYING CHRIST... ETERNAL LOVER OF ALL LOST SOULS...

LOOKS DOWN FROM HEAVEN UPON EVERY ONE OF US...
GOES WITH US IN ALL OUR WANDERINGS...
BEARS WITH US IN OUR SINS... IN OUR TRANSGRESSIONS...
AND STILL IS GRACIOUS TO FORGIVE...

HIS PLEA FOR OUR REDEMPTION IS CONTINUOUS...
FOR HIS LOVE... "SUFFERETH LONG... AND IS KIND...
IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED... IS NOT SOON ANGRY...
BEARETH ALL THINGS...
THE LENGTH OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS THE LENGTH OF
ETERNITY AND FAR OUT-DISTANCES ALL HUMAN SIN,..

POINT THREE... WHAT IS THE DEPTH OF THAT LOVE?

DEPTH AND HEIGHT AS I SAID AT THE BEGINNING...
ARE TWO WAYS OF EXPRESSING THE SAME DIMENSION...
FOR THE ONE WE BEGIN AT THE TOP AND MEASURE DOWN...
THE OTHER WE BEGIN AT THE BOTTOM AND MEASURE UP...

THE TOP IS THE THRONE... AND DOWNWARD ???
HOW IS THAT TO BE STATED....
IN WHAT TERMS OF DISTANCE ARE WE TO EXPRESS IT?

HOW FAR IS IT FROM THE THRONE OF THE UNIVERSE...
FROM THE LOFTY HEIGHTS OF PURE GOD-HEAD...
TO THE MANGER AT BETHLEHEM ...???
TO THE CROSS OF CALVARY...???
TO THE TOMB IN THE GARDEN... ???

THAT IS THE DEPTH OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

HOWEVER FAR FROM CO EQUAL DIVINITY IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER... IS FROM LOWLINESS OF THE FORM OF A SERVANT AND THE SORROWS ... LIMITATIONS... REJECTIONS PAIN AND DEATH...
THAT IS THE MEASURE OF THE DEPTH OF CHRIST'S LOVE...

IT HAS BEEN SPECULATED THAT ORIGIN OF LIFE ON EARTH... WAS THE FALLING OF THE FRAGMENT OF A METEOR FROM SOME OTHER SYSTEM WITH A SPECK OF ORGANIC LIFE ON IT AND FROM THAT SPECK ALL LIFE DEVELOPED...

THAT MAY BE THE CASE IN REGARD OF THE PHYSICAL LIFE... THAT IS TRUE IN THE CASE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE...

IT ALL ORIGINATES BECAUSE CHRIST HAS DESCENDED... AND BROUGHT WITH HIM A GERM OF LIFE...
WHICH HE HAS PLANTED IN THE HEART OF HUMANITY... THAT IS THE MEASURE OF THE DEPTH OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST...

FOURTH... AND LAST POINT...
WHAT IS THE HEIGHT OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST?

WE FOUND THAT THE WAY TO MEASURE THE DEPTH WAS TO BEGIN AT THE THRONE AND GO DOWN TO THE CROSS...
AND THEN TO THE LOWEST LEVEL OF EVIL...

THE WAY TO MEASURE THE HEIGHT...
IS TO BEGIN AT THE CROSS AND THE LOWEST LEVEL OF EVIL..
AND TO GO UP TO THE THRONE...

THAT IS TO SAY THE HIGHEST THING IN THE UNIVERSE...
IS THE SHINING APEX... THE GLITTERING PINNACLE...
THE RADIANT LIGHT OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST...

GOD'S LOVE WHICH TOWERS ABOVE US AND GLEAMS...
LIKE THE SHINING CROSS ON THE TOP OF SOME CATHEDRAL
IS NOT INACCESSIBLE... REQUIRING ANGEL'S WINGS...
THE HEIGHT OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS A HOSPITABLE HEIGHT... TO WHICH WE CAN EASILY CLIMB...

THE HEAVEN IN THE NATURAL WORLD...
TOUCHES EARTH AT THE FURTHEST POINT FROM US...

BUT IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD...
THE PLACE WHERE HEAVEN TOUCHES ME...
IS RIGHT OVER MY HEAD...
THE NEAREST POSSIBLE POINT TO ME ...

CHRIST HAS COME TO LIFT US TO HIMSELF...
THE HEIGHT OF THIS LOVE... IS THAT IT BEARS US...
LIFTS US UP... IF WE LET IT... LIFTS US UP TO SIT...
UPON THAT THRONE WHERE HE HIMSELF IS ENTHRONED...

AND SO CHRIST'S LOVE IS ALL AROUND US...
LIKE A SUNNY TROPICAL SEA... ITS BLUE WAVES LIKE A
MULTITUDE OF LITTLE ISLANDS...

OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES... LITTLE ISLANDS...
IN THAT GREAT OCEAN OF LOVE...
THE DIMENSIONS OF WHICH ARE IMMEASURABLE...
STRETCHING ABOVE BENEATH... AROUND... ENDLESS

BUT IN THIS ENDLESS OCEAN OF LOVE..
YOU CAN SHUT IT OUT OF YOU LIVES...

******* WE HAVE ALL EXPERIMENTED WITH A JAR IN WATER...
ETC... WELL JUST LIKE THAT...

IT IS POSSIBLE TO PLUNGE A JAR INTO MIDDLE OF THE
ATLANTIC OCEAN... FURTHER.. DEEPER THAN ANYONE HAS
EVER DESCENDED... AND BRING IT UP ON THE DECK OF LIFE...
AS DRY INSIDE.. AS IF IT HAD BEEN LYING ON AN OVEN...

IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO
ME... TO LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE THEIR BEING...
IN THAT SEA OF LOVE... AND NEVER TO HAVE LET ONE DROP
OF ITS RICHEST GIFTS INTO THEIR HEARTS OR THEIR LIVES...

BE SURE YOUR HEARTS IS OPEN FOR HIM TO COME IN...
BY HUMBLE FAITH IN HIS GREAT SACRIFICE FOR YOU AND ME.

AND WHEN CHRIST DWELLS IN YOUR HEART BY FAITH...
WILL YOU BE ABLE TO GROW IN COMPREHENDING THE
BOUNDLESS GREATNESS... THE ENDLESS DURATION...
THE ABSOLUTE PERFECTION...

OF THE MEASURE OF THE LOVE OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST...
AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST...
WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE...

"PAUL'S PRAYER" EPHESIANS 3: 14 - 21

ONE OF THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS I FACE...
IN TYING OUR BIBLE STUDY WITH THE SUNDAY SERMON...
IS HOW TO UNDERLINE WHAT WE ABSOLUTELY NEED TO
KNOW NOW... TO MOVE US FORWARD AS A FELLOWSHIP...

IT IS DIFFICULT BECAUSE... WE DEPEND ON A FEW MINUTES
NURTURING EACH WEEK TO GROW SPIRITUALLY STRONG...
TO FACE LIFE'S DAILY TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS...
BUT ALSO TO DO GOD'S WILL IN THIS PLACE AT THIS TIME...

I FEEL IN MY SPIRIT... THAT GOD HAS A PARTICULAR ROLE
FOR US IN THIS COMMUNITY... I FEEL MORE CONFIDENT
ABOUT IT THE DEEPER I GO INTO THIS BIBLE STUDY...
IT POINTS TOWARD A PURPOSE FOR US AS A CHURCH...

EVERYONE WHO TALKS WITH ME MORE THAN ONCE...
IS AWARE OF THE PAIN I FEEL AT THE POLARIZATION OF
PEOPLE... OF OUR INABILITY TO COME TOGETHER IN OUR
DIVERSITY... TO CELEBRATE OUR COMMONALITY...
AS SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD...

COMMUNITY CHURCH AT THE CIRCLE...
THIS GATHERED BODY OF BELEIVERS...
HAS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY AS A BEACON OF HOPE...
THAT A DIVERSE PEOPLE CAN WORSHIP... FELLOWSHIP AND
BUILT TOGETHER A COMMUNITY OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH...

AS WE SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST...
AND GIVE OPPORTUNITY TO "CHRIST IN OUR HEARTS"
WE FIND IN EPHESIANS THE PLAN AND PURPOSE GOD HAS
FOR US INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS...

THIS LETTER OF PAUL'S TO THE EPHESIANS...
IS A MODEL FOR PROMOTING UNITY IN DIVERSITY...
PAUL DID NOT WANT TO SEE TWO CHURCHES...
A JEWISH CHRISTIAN CHURCH... AND A GENTILE CHRISTIAN
CHURCH... PAUL WANTED ONE CHURCH...

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS... WRITTEN AS A CIRCULAR LETTER TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA... EXALTED THE ONENESS... THE UNIVERSALITY AND UNSPEAKABLE POWER OF GATHERED BELIEVERS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST...

TO THE APOSTLE PAUL CHRIST IS BIG ENOUGH....
THERE IS ROOM ENOUGH...
NOT ONLY FOR PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RACES...
DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS AND PREJUDICES...

BUT CHRIST IS ONE WHO HAS POWER TO SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS OF HUMAN-KIND AND BRING INTO UNITY AND HARMONY WITH GOD ALL EARTHLY SOCIAL AND FAMILY LIFE...

AND EVEN AS HE STATES IN VS. 10 ...THE MYRIADS OF BEINGS IN THE INFINITE UNSEEN UNIVERSE ...
AND SO PAUL BEGINS HIS PRAYER...

HE PRAYS "THAT GOD GRANT YOU...TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN."

THERE IS SOMETHING RESIDENT IN EACH OF US...
BY VIRTUE OF OUR BEING HUMAN...
SOMETHING THAT TALKS AND SHARES THOUGHTS WITH US...
INFLUENCING OUR EVERY MOVE AND MOTIVE...

BUT BECAUSE AS HUMAN BEINGS WE NEVER LOSE THE GOD GIVEN FREEDOM TO CHOOSE... BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL...
WE NEED THE STRENGTH TO CALL UPON GOD...
WE NEED STRENGTH TO ALLOW GOD TO ENTER OUR LIVES...

STRENGTH IS THE FIRST NEED OF THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRIALS AND TRIBULATION...
WE NEED COURAGE TO TAKE IN THE FIRST STEP... THOUGH WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE AWAITS OUR CALL...

THE PURPOSE FOR THIS STRENGTHENING BY THE SPIRIT IS GIVEN IN PAULS SECOND PRAYER PETITION...
THAT... "CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOU HEARTS BY FAITH"

CHRIST COMES INTO OUR HEART BY OUR BELIEF IN HIM...
OUR EXPRESSION OF FAITH... HOWEVER FAINT...
IS SUFFICENT FOR CHRIST TO ENTER...
NEVER MORE IS HE TO STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK...

WE NEED NOT WAIT FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT...
HE INDWELLS THE BELIVER THE MOMENT EXPRESSES
SINCERE BELIEF IN THE LORD JESUS... AND HE AWAITS THAT
PERSON'S DESIRE AND TRUST THAT HE CONTROL HIM...

TRUST... WHICH IS FAITH... IS ACTUALLY... SELF-DISTRUST...
SELF DIS-TRUST BRINGS US CLOSER TO CHRIST...
FAITH IS DESIRE... NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD...
HAS LONGING FOR... SEEKING CHRIST BEEN UNANSWERED...

YOU HAVE TO TRUST... AND THEN YOU POSSESS..
WE OPEN THE DOOR FOR THE ENTERANCE OF CHRIST BY
THE SIMPLE ACT OF FAITH... AND HE WILL SQUEEZE IN...

THAT LITTLE THING SLIVER OF FAITH WILL LET HIM IN...

******* GEORGIA / NO KEY / DOOR LOCKED / KNIFE / ETC.
DON'T KNOW WHAT EXPERIENCE SHE WAS DRAWING ON...
OPENED DOOR WITH A KNIFE...

THAT LITTLE THIN KNIFE OPENED THE DOOR...
AND ONCE INSIDE... *** DESCRIBE ****
NEED CLEANING... UNFIT FOR USE... ETC...
IT NEEDED WORK... PREPARATION FOR LIVING THERE...

I MADE THE POINT AT BIBLE STUDY THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT
SETS UP HOUSE-KEEPING WITHIN US...
FIXING THE PLACE UP AS WE ALLOW THE WORK TO
PROGRESS... PATCHING HERE... PAINTING OVER THERE...

TEARING OUT AND COMPLETELY REBUILTING SOME PARTS...
MAINTAINING OTHERS...THAT'S THE WORK OF THE THE HOLY
SPIRIT...WORK OF REVENOVATION...CLEANING US UP...
IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS WITHIN OUR SOUL...

AND IT ALL BEGINS WITH A SLIVER OF FAITH IN CHRIST...
THE REAL QUESTION IS HOW COMFORTABLE WE MAKE HIM...
MANY ASK FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT TO FILL THEM...
BUT ARE UNWILLING TO MAKE A CLEAN SWEEP OF THINGS
AND BE DONE WITH SOME PET SIN... IN HIS / HER LIFE...

WE MUST NOT THINK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FILLING OUR
HEARTS AS WATER FILLS A BOTTLE OR AIR A VACUUM...
THE HEART OF A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A RECEPTACLE...
TO BE EMPTIED SO THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT MIGHT FILL IT...

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT A SUBSTANCE...
TO FILL AN EMPTY RECEPTACLE... HE IS A PERSON...
TO CONTROL ANOTHER PERSON... THE BELIEVER...

THE HEART IS A SYMBOL USED TO REFER TO THE WILL...
REASON AND EMOTIONS... THUS THE HOLY SPIRIT...
POSSESSES OR CONTROLS THE RATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL
ACTIVITIES OF THE BELEIVER... TO THE EXTENT THE BELEIVER
ALLOWS THE HOLY SPIRIT TO CONTROL HIS / HER LIFE...

THEREFORE WHEN WE SPEAK OF A CHRISTIAN FILLED WITH
THE SPIRIT WE ARE REFERRING TO THE CONTROL WHICH A
DIVINE PERSON... THE HOLY SPIRIT...
HAS OVER A HUMAN BEING... THE BELIEVER...

THE SPIRIT IS NOT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF POWER GIVEN THE
THE BELIEVER WHICH HE CAN USE IN HIS ACTIVITIES...
IT IS NOT THAT THE BELIEVER USES THE POWER OF GOD...
BUT THAT GOD'S POWER USES HIM OR HER...

THE ONLY THINGS THAT WOULD DEPRIVE THE CHRISTIAN OF
THIS FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT... THAT IS CONTROL BY THE
HOLY SPIRIT... ARE A LACK OF DEFINITE SUBJECTION...

THIS DESIRE FOR THE CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT... AND
THIS TRUST IN THE LORD JESUS FOR THAT CONTROL...
IS JUST A PART OF THE BELIEVER'S OBLIGATION...

ONE CANNOT SAY... "I WILL JUST REST QUIETLY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ENERGIZING AND SUPERVISING MINISTRY... THAT'S ALL THAT IS NECESSARY... THAT'S ALL THAT'S REQUIRED...

REALITY IS THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE IS NOT A MERE...
"LET GO AND LET GOD" AFFAIR...
IT IS A TAKE HOLD WITH GOD BUSINESS...

IT IS NOT A MERE REST IN GOD AND EXISTENCE...
LIKE THAT OF A JELLYFISH FLOATING IN THE WARM WATER...
GOD IS NOT DEVELOPING JELLY FISH CHRISTIANS...

GOD WANTS TO DEVELOP HEROES...
CHRISTIAN MEN AND WOMAN OF MORAL STAMINA...
OF SPIRITUAL POWER...

IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD NO ONE BECOMES STRONG BY MERELY EATING WHOLESOME FOOD AND RESTING...
EXERCISE IS WHAT IS NEEDED TO CHANGE THE FOOD ENERGY INTO BONE AND MUSCLE...

THE CHRISTIAN MUST EXERCISE TO GROW STRONG...
IN HIS OR HER SPIRITUAL LIFE...
BIBLE STUDY... DAILY DEVOTIONS... BIBLE READINGS...
A DESIRE TO BETTER KNOW THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST...

LIKEWISE THE BELIEVER WHO DOES NOT SAY YES TO THE WILL OF HED AND NO TO SIN...
IS NOT COOPERATING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT...

AND THE CHRISTIAN WHO DOES NOT ENGAGE IN A HOLY SPIRIT DIRECTED MINISTRY OF SOME KIND OD WORK...
FURTHERING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD OF GOD...
SPREADING THE GOSPEL... IS NOT...
COOPERATING WITH THE SPIRIT...

THIS IDEAL COMBINATION OT TRUST... FAITH IN CHRIST...
IN SUBMISSION TO AND DEPENDENCE UPON...
THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...

AND OF THE CONSTANT INTEREST IN PARTICIPATION WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE THINGS OF GOD... DOING GOD'S WORK AND WILL PRODUCES THE BEST RESULT... IN THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE...

THE COMBINATION DEVELOPS AND BUILDS A STRONG SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION IN OUR LIVES... IT GIVES A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY WITH MORAL COURAGE... AND STRENGTH OF CHARACTER THAT WEATHERS THE MOST SEVRE STORMS...

IT ENABLES US TO MOVE AMONG OUR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS SHARING OUR EXPERIENCES... WITHOUT RIDING ROUGHSHOD OVER THEIR TENDER HEARTS... BUT RATHER IN A LOVING WAY... SO THAT WE LEAVE A SENSE OF THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST...

IT DEVELOPS SPIRITUAL GIANTS... WITHIN US... WHO CAN SHOUT... "GREATER IF HE THAT IS IN ME..." THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD..."

THAT'S THE FIRST TWO PETITIONS OF PAUL'S PRAYER... "THAT HE WOULD GRANT YOU ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY... TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN...

AND THAT..."CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS BY FAITH, THAT YE BE ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE..."

PAUL IS PRAYING FOR US TO BECOME BETTER PERSONS... BY ALLOWING THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF GOD... THE HOLY SPIRIT... TO SET UP HOUSKEEPING IN OUR HEARTS... THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT MIGHT BEGIN THE TASK OF REVOVATION AND RENEWAL OF THE INNER PERSON...

*** EXAMPLE*** HOUSE... INDIVIDUAL...CONDO... GATHERED BODY OF BELIEVERS...WORKING TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE OUR COMMONALITY IN CHRIST...

APPENDIX C

COMPOSITE OF INITIAL SURVEY

COMPOSITE OF INITIAL SURVEY

Note: Results indicated are listed by number assigned to each participant.

1. What do you believe is the purpose of the church

1. "worship God and fellowship"

2. "to provide a spiritual home and family and dissemination of Jesus' teachings"

3. "Provide a spiritual place within a community for worship and for other purposeful gatherings."

4. "The leadership role in the community, life style, Christian education, consultation for community decisions."

5. "To provide a unbiased nourishing place for the community to come together in many different ways from spiritual to social. A true place for all to feel safe and be encouraged to blossom and grow in service back to the community."

6. "To spread the teachings and principles of Christ."

7.

8. "To teach and bring people into the church - thus to God. Fulfill spiritual need of congregation.

9. "A prayerful community worshipping together with love."

10. Rank by what you think is important, the following:

Respondent	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***	***9***
prayer	2	2	2	4	3	6	4	4	1
music	4	3	4	6	4	2	7	2	4
preaching	1	1	5	7	2	3	3	1	2
participation	6	4	6	3	2	7	6	6	5
hymns	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	6
passing the peace	5	6	7	2	6	5	2	7	7
sermon	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3

3. Which part of church worship is most important to you?

Sermon	8
Prayer	1

4. Is Christianity an individual or a community religion?

Individual	7
Community	2
Both	4

5. Rank by importance the following with respect to the church:

Respondent	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***	***9***
social	4	6	5	4	6	5	3	5	5
spiritual	1	1	1	6	1	1	1	1	3
doctrine		2	6	5		6	4	6	4
Bible	3	3	2	1	5	3	2	2	1
politics		7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
prayer	2	4	3	2	2	4	5	3	2
praise 5	5	4	3	4	2	6	4	6	

6. Is all music appropriate for the church?

No	4
Yes	2
Almost all	3

7. Rank in order of importance with respect to church administration:

Respondent:	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***	***9***
Treasurer	5	5	5	4	4	5	3	4	5
By-laws	4	2	4	3	6	4		5	4
Pastor	2	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
Bible	1	6	2	1	3	2	2	2	1
Constitution	3	1	3	5	2	3		6	3
Moderator	6	4	6	6	5	6		3	6

8. Fill the blank: The _____ is most important in the governing of the church.

People	2
Constitution	2
Board/Pastor	1
By-laws	1
Pastor	1
Board	1
Bible	1

9. The three most important persons in the church are:

Pastor	8
Treasurer	3
Sexton	3
Secretary	2
Board	1
Choir	1
Deacons	1
Moderator	1

10. Describe briefly on the back, your model ministry.

1. "To let the people understand the Bible and the Word better and to have a nice community with other members."

2. "Groups of individuals working together on a regular basis. Providing an outreach into their community - providing programs and services. Welcoming all who would care to belong."

3. "Focus on #1 answer"

4. "My model ministry is one where the minister who represents will be instrumental not only in developing the growth of the church but in developing a relationship with our community. The minister will be not only our spiritual

teacher but one who can consel (sic) and guide us us in social and personal problems, one who is aware of our needs, provides avenues for change, looks to the future but builds on our past successes. Attracts the new but still embraces the tried an true."

5. "Well balanced congregation in terms of ethnic and cultural mix."

6.

7.

8. a. The minister's passion and oratorical skills are the glue that holds the church together.

   b. Worship through diverse music aimed at different age groups.

   c. Ritual with some pomp (minimal).

   d. Active Sunday School. If children come, parents usually follow.

   e. Workers in church should be given special titles that recognize their roles."

9. "A ministry that is welcoming, teaching and inviting. A church that includes worship for all ages and the social programs that make that an attractive choice. A church which is able to speak to the congregation and its needs. A church which helps the Bible be more easily understood and helps the church grow in a true Christian way."

11. What is the goal of the church?

1. "To Spread the Word of God."

2. "To make people feel welcome, to comfort and love and teach."

3. "service - growth"

4. "Same as answer #1, to be relevant, creative in bringing the community to the church. Without the leadership of the church the community a leader ent

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my personal and spiritual growth during the ministry of Reverend Baisden.

My relationship with God has deepened over the last two years. Reverend Baisden came to Community Church at the Circle, Mount Vernon, NY as a part time minister in October 1995. I believe that his approach to teaching is unique and productive.

Community Church at the Circle is an integrated church located in the center of an integrated city. I believe that this is part of its appeal. I have a summer home in Pennsylvania where I attend an all white church that lacks dimension, even my 12 year old son noticed it.

I participate in a Bible Study group taught by Rev. Baisden. The group meets on Wednesday evenings and the bible study is preceded by a supper prepared by one of the group members. During these meetings I am encouraged to learn more about the bible, the indwelling spirit, biblical history and the human element. These discussions have brought the group closer to each other as well as develop a deepened spiritual understanding in each individual member. The Bible now seems to be more alive to me and I feel a greater connection to my church.

The second series of the Bible study focused on the future of the church. Reverend Baisden asked us to explore the differences between Euro-centric church and Afro-centric churches. A planned trip to visit two model churches which demonstrated this was arranged The group was asked to observe and later discuss the trips. The goal of this group was to focus on the future of our church after observing other churches. The two churches had surprisingly similar worship services and most of the group agreed that our congregation was not that unlike either group.

We agreed as a group that **Unity in the Community** would be our focus, welcoming all people from all ethnic groups and cultures. We agreed it was the warmth and love that we could extend which would be our focus. Celebrating diversity and recognizing our Commonality in Christ would be the direction this church would grow.

Rev. Baisden and I have had many discussions regarding race relations within this city. I have grown in many areas since Rev. Baisden has come to this church. His teaching style is non-intrusive and non-threatening. Although I considered myself a Christian before 1995, I consider myself a more enlightened Christian today because of his presence in my life. I can now identify injustice due to race more quickly, I am more open to other's views and I see the indwelling spirit as my guide. I am growing and am proud to have Reverend Baisden as the person leading this ministry, in this church at the crossroads of this city's history.

Joy [redacted]

The Bible Study has proved to be much more than I initially thought it would be. There has been a growth within me, an awakening of understanding, an increase in knowledge and a desire to continue with the study.

The driving force to make the Church's Vision a reality is in the Bible. This has been presented by looking and at our basic beliefs. We have been studying the source of our strength coming from God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and from each other ; the indwelling spirit, a Gift of God to all believers; the sessions on prayer, the types and the composition of prayer; the character of Jesus (the reading of "Who is this Jesus?"); the difference between worship and edification; the gift of the Spirit and using the gift of the spirit to build a foundation. It has touched my heart and changes have made in my inner self subtle as they may be – I know it.

Visiting the two churches - comparing their worship services following this with discussions as to where we are and where we want to be. I feel much more capable now to forge ahead with our plans to give our church to the community for the betterment of the community. The bible study these past months have been the beginning -- the building of a foundation.

And one must not forget that this little gathering has become a group that has grown together – in getting to know each other, -- in being concerned with and about each other, and in becoming long term friends in Christ.

To Whom It May Concern:

I became a member of Community Church for all the wrong reasons.

I had friends who were members and I was acquainted with the minister a woman, through my involvement with Project Family and the Soup Kitchen. As a liberal and a feminist I felt I would get a handle in an area about which I knew very little.

I was born and raised in Scotland and although I attended a Protestant school my father was an agnostic who encouraged me to read and study many forms of religious beliefs. He believed that I should decide for myself the religious path I should take, if any.

As an adult I worked in community based employment and training programs where I felt I could fulfill my desire to make changes in the social and educational inequalities which existed in Mount Vernon (and still exists). I was forthright in my opinion that organized religion was hypocritical and out of touch with the needs of the community. In Mount Vernon this was true of the predominately white churches. Certainly the black ministry was highly visible and verbal in my community experience.

Personally there was a void in my life that no amount of intellectual reasoning could fill. I felt truly alienated in the most literal sense.

Thus I joined Community Church. There was no pressure to embrace any religious dogma. The United Church of Church was gentle and I was attracted to the racial diversity of the congregation white, black, indian and hispanic. The older members of the church were open to change, but the church was dying.

The lady minister did not work out, and when Reverend Baisden arrived Community Church was limping along with no spiritual focus, even I could recognize that we were just going through the motions. Our future look bleak indeed.

When Reverend Baisden became part of our church family his enthusiasm and dedication brought profound changes to our church not the least of which is his Model in Ministry project.

Reverend Baisden involved himself in every aspect of our fellowship, He repaired the plumbing and did some electrical work he participated in all our flea markets and his sermons were edifying and nurturing. I really began to enjoy being a church member.

The weekly bible study W.O.W. (Worship on Wednesday) quickly became a very important ingredient in my personal quest for a spiritual awakening.

The participants were not just Community Church Members, we had a couple from other churches, but we represented a truly diverse group, culturally racially and ethnically.

This diversity made for very stimulating discussions but Reverend Baisden kept us focused and guided us through our bible study with clarity and patience. He did not flinch from any of our questions or concerns.

We gained not only insight and understanding of Jesus, his life and death, we also gained different perspectives from each other, promoting respect and affection amongst the participants.

A very important issue for our group to explore was to decide on the direction for Community Church in terms of methodology of worship, which would meet the needs of our congregation and appeal to those others in our Mount Vernon Community longing for a church home.

Reverend Baisden arranged two field trips for us. One to a Euro-Centric Church and one to an Afro-Centric Church. Both United Church of Christ with striking differences in their approach to edification.

Our group concluded, however that our own Community Church had already in place a worship service which encompassed and embraced the diversity of our congregation. In fact we were "doing all right".

Over the ten week bible study, I found myself believing in and discovering the meaning of the indwelling spirit of Jesus Christ. This was made even more evident by the sermons which Reverend Baisden give on Sundays after each bible study session.

I listened and really heard what he was saying. My own spiritual journey had begun. I now read the bible and sing the hymns with an understanding and feeling I never thought possible.

The congregation of Community Church is growing and our bible study group has become a cohesive core of members providing a strong positive force in our church community.

Reverend Baisden has shown us that the gifts of the spirit which we are trying to develop as a church community will bring unity to our larger community of Mount Vernon.

This ancient celtic poem exemplifies our philosophy:

Peace between Neighbors.
Peace between kindred
Peace between lovers
In the love of the King of Life.

Peace between person and person
Peace between husband and wife
Peace between women and childrens
The peace of Christ above all peace

From Carmina Gadelica

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